



2015

The Effects of the 2008 Financial Recession on Superintendents' Leadership and Decision Making

Elizabeth Ann Mcnamara

Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation

Mcnamara, Elizabeth Ann, "The Effects of the 2008 Financial Recession on Superintendents' Leadership and Decision Making" (2015). *Dissertations*. Paper 1288.
http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1288

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Copyright © 2015 Elizabeth Ann Mcnamara

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE EFFECTS OF THE 2008 FINANCIAL RECESSION ON SUPERINTENDENTS'

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING:

A MULTI-CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

ELIZABETH ANN MCNAMARA

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2015

Copyright by Elizabeth A. McNamara, 2015

All rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the two superintendents that participated in my dissertation. I truly appreciate your time and efforts you dedicated to the study. Thank you for taking time to give back to the field of educational leadership. Through your experiences and the decisions you made during the 2008 financial recession, future and current school leaders will learn and grow in the field of education.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Susan Sostak and Dr. Lawrence Wyllie who provided invaluable insights on the topic of educational leadership. Your perspective and experiences as former school superintendents are extremely valuable and added excellent insight to my study. Thank you for your patience, feedback and support through this process.

A sincere thank you to Dr. Marla Israel, my dissertation director, who has truly been an inspiration to me throughout this process. As a chair you offered a perfect balance of challenge and support which pushed me to complete this finished product. Learning through your experiences as a mother, school administrator, professor, and dissertation director has helped sculpt me into a more balanced person and educational leader. A heart felt thank you for your support, guidance, and patience with me along the way.

Thank you to my superintendent Dr. Tingley, who has been extremely supportive during this process. I appreciate the time you spent with me to review

potential dissertation topics. Your guidance and feedback helped steer me in the direction of my chosen topic, one in which I have truly enjoyed writing on.

Additionally, I would like to take time to thank my family. Mom and dad, thank you for bringing me into this world and providing me with unconditional love and support no matter what. Thank you for teaching me the value of hard work and the importance of always doing the right thing. You have been my true teachers in life and you serve as amazing role models. I hope to do the same for my children. To my brother Joe Bartkus, although you and I often had conflicting views as kids, I am and always have been proud to have you as my brother. You have helped shape me into the person I have become today. To my sister Cindy Stewart, thank you for always being there to listen and provide support during stressful times. There is nothing better than having a sister who is truly your best girlfriend.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband Patrick McNamara. Words cannot express the appreciation I have for the love and support you have provided me during this process. You are an amazing husband and a wonderful father and none of this would be possible without you. You are my best friend and I am honored to have you in my life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything. I am excited to see what the future holds for our family.

DEDICATION

To Avery Elizabeth McNamara

May you always value the art of learning for it will be the key that unlocks your future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Study	1
Significance of the Study	2
Financial Crisis of 2008 – Causes and Connections to Education.....	2
The School Superintendent	6
Ethical Perspective.....	9
Conceptual Framework	10
Methodology	12
Methods of Data Collection	13
Interviews.....	13
Observations	14
Document Analysis.....	14
Triangulation of Data	14
Limitations	15
Definition of Terms.....	19
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	24
Introduction.....	24
Superintendents’ Leadership.....	25
Roles and Responsibilities of a Superintendent.....	25
Composition of a Superintendent.....	26
Route to Achieve Superintendency.....	28
Superintendent as a Financial Leader	30
Illinois Public Funding.....	32
A Historical Background	32
A Need for Change – The Introduction of Equalization.....	36
Federal Funding Support.....	38
The Decline of Local Control	40
Sources of Revenue for Illinois School Districts.....	44
Overview of the 2008 Financial Crisis	50
The Effects of the 2008 Financial Recession on School Districts	55
Ethical Perspectives	60
Ethics.....	60

Code of Ethics	61
Ethical Dilemmas	62
Ethical Lenses	63
Summary	67
III. METHOD	69
Introduction	69
Research Strategy	70
Sampling Plan	72
Interview Schedule Design	74
Data Collection	76
Data Analysis	79
Bias Limitations	81
Summary of Methodology	82
IV. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA	85
Data Collection Process for School District “A”	86
School District “A”	87
Semi-Structured Interviews	90
Superintendent “A” Semi-Structured Interview	92
District “A” Observation	111
District “A” Observation Chart	113
District “A” Document Review	115
District “A” Document Chart	116
District “A” Data Comparison	119
Data Collection Process for School District “B”	125
School District “B”	126
Semi-Structured Interviews	131
Superintendent “B” Semi-Structured Interview	133
District “B” Observation	145
District “B” Observation Chart	149
District “B” Document Review	152
District “B” Document Chart	153
District “B” Data Comparison	154
V. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA	162
Conclusions	164
Research Question 1	164
Relevance of Research Data to Literature	164
Relevance of Research Data	167
Research Question 2	176
Relevance of Research Data to Literature	176
Relevance of Research Data	178
Research Question 3	185
Relevance of Research Data to Literature	185
Relevance of Research Data	188

Research Question 4	196
Limitations	200
Recommendations for Further Research.....	201
Final Thoughts	203

APPENDIX

A. PHONE SCRIPT.....	211
B. LETTER OF CONSENT	214
C. CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	218
D. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	220

REFERENCES	223
------------------	-----

VITA.....	242
-----------	-----

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographics	27
2. Superintendent “A” Demographics.....	91
3. Descriptive Notes for Board of Education Meeting for School District “A” held on March 17, 2014	114
4. Document Chart for School District “A”	117
5. Data from the Study of School District “A” as Related to Ethical Lenses	120
6. Superintendent “B” Demographics.....	132
7. Descriptive Notes for Board of Education Meeting for School District “B” held on April 8, 2014	149
8. Document Chart for School District “B”	153
9. Data from the Study of School District “B” as Related to Ethical Lenses	156
10. Number of Times Ethical Lens were Present during Research Study	196

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Triangulation of Data.....	15
2. Data Collection	79
3. Data Analysis	81
4. Qualitative Research Protocol.....	86
5. School District “A” – Student Demographic Information.....	88
6. School District “A” – Financial Information	88
7. School District “A” – Organizational Chart	89
8. School District “B” – Student Demographic Information	127
9. School District “B” – Financial Information	128
10. School District “B” – Organizational Chart.....	129
11. School District “B” – Current Organizational Chart	130

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendents' leadership and decision-making. A great deal of scholarship has addressed the effects of the 2008 financial recession as well as educational leadership, however, few studies have investigated the direct impact of the 2008 financial recession on superintendent's leadership.

The study answers the following research questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?
 - a.) What considerations were made regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum, school personnel, & extracurricular programs?
2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique in what lenses did the superintendents' ground their decision making?
4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

This multi-case study focused on two Illinois K-12 unit school districts that are similar in size who rely on a mix of general state aid and property taxes. The participants

were two superintendents whose tenure included the years 2007 to the present day.

Interviews, observations, and document review were used to collect data.

The study concluded that it is essential for superintendents to have a true understanding of their boards' values and beliefs. It showed the value in establishing a solid working relationship with the board. This study shed light on the importance of having a plan in place for the district grounded in the values and beliefs of the school community. Additionally, this study identified the need for political leadership training and emphasized the importance of reflection as a means to promote growth as an educational leader.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation explores the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendents' leadership and decision-making. Specifically this study looks at what reductions, if any, were made in school districts by superintendents in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs and the reason behind their decision making. This dissertation analyzes these decisions through the conceptual framework of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique.

The study answers the following research questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?
 - a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?
2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?

3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique in what lenses did the superintendents' ground their decision making?
4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

Significance of the Study

Financial Crisis of 2008 – Causes and Connections to Education

The 2008 global financial crisis, also known as the “Great Recession,” is one of the most significant downward economic shifts in the history of the United States (Verick, 2010). With far ranging implications for consumers, corporations and public entities, the financial crisis altered the way in which our economy plans for future growth and manages risk of current trends. Several entities in the economy previously deemed “Too Big to Fail” found themselves on the brink of collapse, as experts ignored warning signs (Verick, 2010). As these events occurred researchers and experts tried to diagnose how our economy went from several years of strong growth to rapid decline so quickly (Verick, 2010). While the causes of the collapse are difficult to pinpoint, there are key elements that led to the ultimate tipping point. One of the most public aspects of the crisis is connected to the fall of the domestic housing market, commonly referred to as the “Housing Bubble” or the “Subprime Mortgage Crisis.” The subprime mortgage crisis, as an element of the financial crisis, had far ranging implications on government budgets specifically relating to the collection and distribution of tax revenue (Bernanke, 2011). As public school districts rely heavily on tax revenue to fund operations, the collapse of the housing market played a pivotal role in understanding how the financial crisis interacts with public education (Kersten, 2012).

From 2002-2006 the United States housing market experienced astounding growth (Byun, 2010). However, a portion of this growth was fueled by practices that ultimately led to the collapse of the housing market. These practices, more commonly known as predatory lending, gave many unqualified or “subprime” consumers the opportunity to purchase property beyond their means (Stiglitz, 2009). The use of adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs) grew dramatically during this time period leaving these subprime buyers with balloon interest payments they were unable to execute (Stiglitz, 2009). With large quantities of homeowners now unable to fulfill their mortgage obligations thousands of properties went into default or foreclosure. As a result from 2007-2011 new home construction fell to a halt and overall home sales plummeted. Total home sales in Illinois were down 16.9% in October 2008 to 8,557 sales compared to October 2007 sales of 10,302 (Londrigan & Schaefer, 2008). The effect of the housing collapse on school districts manifested itself through the decreases in both total tax revenue and more importantly property tax revenue.

School districts in Illinois are primarily funded through two different tax mechanisms, local property tax and general state aid. According to the Illinois Department of Revenue the largest share of property tax dollars goes to the local school districts (“The Illinois Property Tax System,” 2002). In 2012 this amount equated to 56.2% of all Illinois school revenues (Kersten, 2012). This money is collected by the county based on assessed property values and then redistributed to the various school districts in the area (“Understanding School Finance,” 2012). As the housing market collapsed new construction declined leaving some school districts with far less new tax

revenue than expected. Additionally, housing prices fell by nearly 16% in Illinois resulting in lower assessed home values (Christie, 2009).

General state aid is the money paid to each school district from the state based on the district's average daily attendance from the previous school year (Fritts, 2006). General state aid utilizes assessed home values as a data point to calculate the bi-annual contributions which makes up the second largest portion of funding for most school districts. Each school district relies on general state aid on different levels depending on a variety of factors. This funding is generated through the general Illinois budget which is primarily funded through various tax streams. Due to a variety of factors from the start of the financial collapse Illinois saw significant declines in tax revenue. In 2009, Illinois was faced with a 1.8 billion budget gap (McNichol, 2008). With fewer consumers, working personal income tax declined by 9% from 2008 to 2009 and sales tax revenue dropped by 8% as consumers spent fewer dollars on goods (Garrett, 2009). Additionally, corporate tax income declined by 22% during this time (Garrett, 2009). The state government relies heavily on this revenue to support a variety of different programs, many with rising costs including pensions and healthcare. Special categorical state aid is money the state allocates for schools for special purposes and state mandated programs including transportation, special education, free lunch program, and bilingual education. "One strategy that the state employs during tough financial times is to prorate categorical funding; that is provide school districts with only a percentage of the categorical funding they are entitled to receive" (Kersten, 2012, p. 11). Overall, the drop in tax revenue has led to a drop in the ability for the Illinois government to deliver their promised amounts

of general state aid to school districts. For districts that rely heavily on state aid this causes shortfall in planned operating budgets.

The property tax extension limitation law (PTELL) also plays a role in superintendents' inability to obtain adequate funding to run their school districts. The PTELL, often referred to as "tax caps," allows a taxing district to receive a limited inflationary increase in tax extensions on existing property in addition to an amount for new construction (Illinois Department of Revenue, 2012). The Property Tax Code statute (35 ILCS 200/18 185 through 35 ILCS 200/18 245), requires that "non-home rule taxing districts in PTELL counties limit the annual increase in property tax extensions to the lesser of five percent or the increase in the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers" (Illinois School Code, 2010). This law was enacted in 1991 to slow the growth of revenues to taxing districts when property values and assessments were increasing faster than the rate of inflation. Property owners now received some protection from tax bills that increase only because the market value of their property was rising rapidly (Illinois Department of Revenue, 2012). If more money is needed than the amount provided by this limitation, the school district can decide to ask the voters for an increase (Illinois Department of Revenue, 2012). From an economic development standpoint, communities unable to raise enough money to provide the public services necessary will not attract residents and businesses to their area. Overtime the lack of new homes and businesses will continue to play a role in the financial strains superintendents are facing today.

Illinois school districts today have very limited resources to fund their operations and face many obstacles that place them at a disadvantage for running effective

functioning school districts. A key measure in determining how to effectively fund a school districts operation is known as per pupil expenditure, which is a method of aligning the costs of operations to an associated dollar figure for each pupil. Per pupil expenditure is defined as “the gross operating cost of a school district (excepting summer school, adult education, bond principal retired, and capital expenditures) divided by the nine-month Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the regular school term” (“Illinois State Board of Education,” 2013). According to the 2011 Public Education Finances Report, Illinois’ average per pupil expenditure during the fiscal year of 2011 was recorded at \$10,774. The average per pupil expenditures of Illinois schools are slightly lower than the surrounding state of Wisconsin (\$11,774) and are slightly higher than the state of Indiana (\$9,370) and Iowa (\$9,807) (Dixon, 2013). Unfortunately, like Illinois, these neighboring states have also found themselves in tough financial situations due to the 2008 economic downturn and have limited resources available to fund their schools (Leachman, Mai, & Oliff, 2012).

Illinois’ severe economic downturn that began in 2007 has resulted in greater uncertainty for state and local budgets. Illinois Schools can no longer take for granted any funding, regardless of its source (Kersten, 2012; “Understanding School Finance,” 2012). With less funding available superintendents find themselves in tough situations and are faced with the stress and pressure to fulfill their responsibility of serving their students with in the community.

The School Superintendent

In all school districts in Illinois other than Chicago the superintendent of schools is the chief officer of the board of education in the operating school district. “The Board

of Education employs the superintendent to be in charge of the administration of the schools under the direction of the Board of Education” (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1990, p. 240). Harris (2009) describes the responsibilities of the school superintendent within the school system. The following arrays of duties include:

- i. Planning, operating, supervising, and evaluating programs, services, and facilities of the district.
- ii. Making recommendations regarding personnel selection
- iii. Initiating the termination or suspension of employees
- iv. Managing the day-to-day operations of the district
- v. Preparing and submitting a proposed budget
- vi. Preparing recommendations for policies to be adopted by the board
- vii. Overseeing the implementation of adopted policies
- viii. Developing administrative regulations to implement policies
- ix. Providing leadership for the attainment of student performance.

Superintendents are perceived as the leaders within their school district. “A leader is someone who has the capacity to create a compelling vision that takes people to a new place, and to translate vision into action. Leaders draw other people to them by enrolling them in their vision” (Bennis & Goldsmith, 1997, p. 4). In the book, Odden (2011) argues that school leaders must have an explicit vision of instructional practice and that every decision must link back to a “finely articulated understanding of effective instructional practice” (p. 9). Superintendents have an ethical and professional responsibility to provide the professional guidance and educational leadership needed to promote student achievement.

While working to consistently improve student achievement, superintendents also have a professional responsibility to lead in a way that upholds the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for school leaders. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008), “these standards provide high-level guidance and insight about the traits, functions of work, and responsibilities asked of school and district leaders” (p. 5). These standards highlight the essential need to identify the qualities necessary for excellence in school administration. Christine DeVita (2007) explains in her book that, “The national conversation has shifted from ‘whether’ leadership really matters or is worth the investment, to ‘how’ to train, place, and support high-quality leadership where it’s needed the most: in the schools and districts where failure remains at epidemic levels” (p. 5). The 2008 ISLLC standards identify the major themes and concepts that educational leaders must address in order to promote the success of every student. The six superintendent standards include:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

This dissertation explores select responsibilities of the Illinois superintendent and determines how the 2008 financial recession provided challenges to some of their roles, responsibilities, and decisions as school leaders.

Ethical Perspective

“Educational leadership is productively conceived in terms of service to students, staff, and society. Although there are lots of ways to get into leadership, sustaining leadership over time requires moral sensitivity and sophistication, always with an eye to service on behalf of others” (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 1). School administrators are faced with a multitude of ethical issues throughout their careers that challenge them to keep their service to students, staff and society at the forefront. “An ethical or moral question is a question in which someone’s well being or rights or duties are at issue or at stake” (Ozar, 2003, p. 1). According to Israel (2004), “A situation can be classified as an ethical dilemma when it involves a choice between values and responsibilities” (p. 26). The 2008 financial recession placed district leaders in a situation where they were challenged to decipher between the ethical dilemma of managing the school budget and continuing to carry out their school mission to ultimately improve student achievement.

Not only are superintendents expected to lead according to the ISLLC standards for school leaders, they also are expected to commit to leadership grounded in the American Association of School Administrators Professional Code of Ethics for Educational Leaders. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has a statement of Ethics for Educational leaders which outlines what one should remember

when making a decision for the school community. According to the AASA Code of Ethics for Educational Leaders (2007),

An educational leader's professional conduct must conform to an ethical code of behavior, and the code must set high standards for all educational leaders. The educational leader provides professional leadership across the district and also across the community. This responsibility requires the leader to maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct while recognizing that his or her actions will be viewed and appraised by the community, professional associates and students. The educational leader acknowledges that he or she serves the schools and community by providing equal educational opportunities to each and every child. The work of the leader must emphasize accountability and results, increased student achievement, and high expectations for each and every student. (p. 1)

By adopting and committing to this code of ethics, an educational leader acknowledges that she is a servant of the school community by acting in a way that provides equal educational opportunities for all students (Code of Ethics, 2007).

This dissertation explores select Illinois superintendents' decision making in response to the 2008 financial crisis. It investigates how these select superintendents handle the challenge of abiding by the ISLLC standards for school leaders and Professional Code of Ethics for Educational Leaders while operating within the strict labyrinth of school finance and school code. The decisions are analyzed through the ethical lenses of Utilitarianism, Deontology, Care, and Critique

Conceptual Framework

Four common ethical perspectives, utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique can be used to help clarify a person's values when faced with tough ethical decisions. These ethical lenses are seen as frameworks for solving ethical dilemmas. They do not provide the superintendents with answers; rather they help them pose questions that will assist them in analyzing decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. This dissertation

analyzes the decisions made by the superintendents based on the conceptual framework of these ethical lenses.

John Stewart Mill, a well-known advocate for this ethical lens, would explain the utilitarian lens as a decision that is made based on what is best for the greatest amount of people (Mill, 2007). “Utilitarian’s acknowledge that sometimes a few must suffer for the benefit of the many, but such trade-offs are just in the nature of the way the world is. Utilitarian’s also acknowledge that the many may suffer minor inconvenience if there is overwhelming benefit to a few” (Simpson & Wagner, 2007, p. 31). A superintendent using this lens would weigh the short term and long term consequences and make a decision based on what was best for the greater good.

The Kantian philosophy of the deontological lens on the other hand, looks to establish the rightness of the action by determining if the decision could be universally applied to all. Kant believes that “having a moral law is open to understanding by everyone able and willing to reason while keeping in mind that there is nothing more valuable in the moral world than the well-being of other autonomous agents” (Simpson & Wagner, 2009, p. 30). A superintendent using this lens decides in favor of the rule or policy that can be universally applied to all regardless of individual consequences.

The ethic of care is supported by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings and is grounded in the central ethical question: what does the “one cared for” require from us? As Gilligan (1977) sees it, “the moral agent must take into account the context of the moral dilemma and the specific relationships involved, grapple with the inherent ambiguities, and attempt to harm no one and care for all through the decision taken” (p.

34). A superintendent decision making grounded in the ethic of care would look to act in a way that shows care and concern for all parties involved.

Scholars such as Joan Shapiro support the ethic of critique and choose to raise difficult questions by critiquing both the laws themselves and the process used to determine if the laws are just (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). “Rather than accepting the ethic of those in power, scholars challenge the status quo by seeking an ethic that will deal with inconsistencies, formulate the hard questions, and debate and change the issues” (p. 13). Superintendents using this ethical lens of critique always look to challenge the status quo and look to hear the voices that are unheard.

By analyzing the Illinois superintendents’ decision making through the conceptual framework of multiple ethical lenses, this research brings awareness to the perspectives that select Illinois superintendents used most often when solving ethical issues concerning finances and schools. By comparing different methods of moral reflection and judgment this study can assist future superintendents by helping them learn from other people’s experiences and the rationale behind their decisions.

Methodology

The methodology for this dissertation is a multi-case study. Yin (2009) explains that “as a research method, the case study is used in many situations to contribute knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena” (p. 4). It allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. Merriam (2009) suggests that “case study is characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Case study is more concrete and contextual. It is more developed by the reader’s interpretation and is based more on reference

populations determined by the population in mind” (p. 40). A main responsibility of superintendents is to maintain fiscal responsibility within a school district. This study contributes knowledge to and provides meaningful information to school leaders who are faced with the dilemma of fulfilling their job responsibilities during tough financial times.

In order to provide a greater understanding on this issue and adequately address the research questions, this multi-case study focuses on two different superintendents in Illinois who lead unit school districts. Interviews, observations, and document review are used to collect data throughout this study. This multi-case study focuses on two Illinois K-12 unit school districts that are similar in size who rely on a mix of general state aid and property taxes to support their schools and programs. To ensure consistency in the study, only superintendent’s whose tenure includes the years 2007 to the present day are included.

Methods of Data Collection

Interviews

Yin (2009) states that “one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview because most case studies are about human affairs or behavioral events. Well informed interviewees can provide important insights into such affairs or events” (p. 108). A semi-structured interview will be conducted on each school district’s superintendent.

After the interviews were transcribed, the ethical lenses are used to analyze the data to help expose trends in superintendent’s decision making. The reader is provided with a rich, thick description from the interviews to allow them to develop a true

understanding of their experiences when faced with tough economic decisions that have the potential of negatively impacting student achievement.

Observations

This dissertation includes observations of school board meetings that have the discussion of the school budget or district reductions on their agendas. Observations allow the observer to notice things that may lead to understanding the context. In this dissertation, this was an important element as the superintendents are in their natural element and provide the study with valuable firsthand knowledge.

Document Analysis

Documents such as newspaper articles and previous board of education minutes that relate to the topic will be reviewed and analyzed. These documents will help provide valuable insight on events that occurred prior to conducting this study.

Triangulation of Data

The use of a variety of different methods of data collection improved the validity and credibility of the findings. Wolcott (2005) says “the researcher should increase the correspondence between the research and the real world” (p. 160). Triangulation, using three methods of data collection, interviews, observations, and documents, is one strategy the researcher used to increase the internal validity of a study (Merriam, 2009). This dissertation used data from the above three sources and analyze its findings through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique.

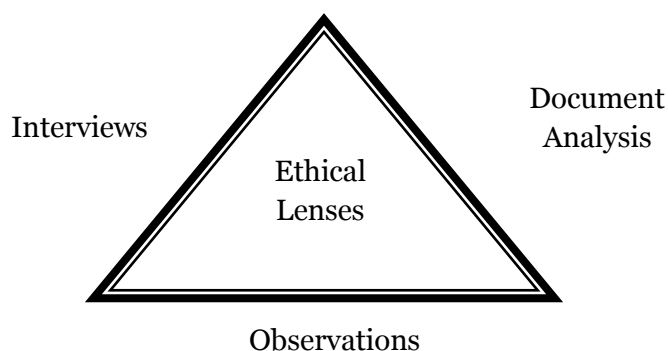


Figure 1. Triangulation of Data

Limitations

This research study is subject to a few limitations caused by the research design. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participant sample of superintendents. This study is limited to two superintendents within the state of Illinois whose districts rely on general state aid for approximately 20% of their funding. The summary results may not be generalizable to other superintendents who do not rely on state funding as much as the two sample school districts with in the study.

Not only does the reliance on general state aid factor as a criteria for this sample selection for this study, but the amount of years the superintendent has been in his or her position also plays a factor in the sample participant selection as well. Given findings in a recent report, the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) stated that “the average tenure of urban superintendents increased from 2.3 years in 1999 to 3.6 years in 2010, an increase of 56 percent, educators across the nation are celebrating” (Pascopella, 2011, p. 31). This study focused primarily on superintendents who were employed in their district during the years where they would have felt the immediate impact of the 2008 financial recession. Many school districts who rely heavily on general state aid for funding also have newly appointed superintendents within the past few years. Therefore, the factor of

length and time of service may impact the generalizability of the study to other superintendents who were not in a position during the time where the immediate impact of the 2008 financial recession was felt on the school district's budget.

This study analyzed previous school board meeting minutes from 2007 to the present day. Although these documents provided useful information about what was discussed in previous board meetings, documentary material are not always as detailed and informative as one would find when conducting an actual observation of a meeting. Merriam (2009) explains one limitation of documentary data is that "it has not been developed for research purposes and may therefore be incomplete from a research perspective" (p. 154).

Though limitations are present with in this study, a qualitative research design is still an appropriate method for this research topic. The use of interviews helped provide the reader with an overall understanding of each superintendents personal experiences dealing with the 2008 financial recession. Interviews are essential when behaviors, feelings, or the way people interpret the world around them cannot be observed. They are also beneficial when the researcher is interested in past events that are impossible to replicate (Merriam, 2009). Interviews allow people to tell their stories. Siedman (1998) states, "Stories are a way of knowing...In order to give the details of their experience a beginning, middle, and end, people must reflect on their experience. It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience" (p. 1). The interviews helped share the stories of the superintendents and make meaning

of the past historical events involving the 2008 financial recession they have been a part of that could not be observed by the researcher.

Though the question of generalizability has burdened qualitative researchers for some time, Merriam (2009) points out, that “in qualitative research a single case or small, nonrandom purposeful sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many” (p. 224). Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest the notion of transferability, in which the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. “The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do” (Merriam, 2009, p. 224). The researcher has a responsibility to provide enough detailed description of the study’s context to enable readers to compare the study with their situations. The experiences of these superintendents is richly described to the reader to provide a thorough understanding allowing them to apply the findings however it fits with their current situations.

Although qualitative researchers can never capture an objective “truth” or “reality”, there are a number of strategies that can be used to strengthen and increase the validity of the study (Merriam, 2009). In this study the researcher will also take the appropriate measures to ensure validity within the study in a variety of ways. The researcher triangulated the data from the two sources of data by examining conclusions from more than one vantage point. Yin suggests that the findings and conclusions of studies in which the researchers triangulate data from multiple sources are more likely to be accurate.

The researcher also used the strategy of member checking where feedback was solicited on the emergent findings from the people that were interviewed. “This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 11). The researcher was in communication with the superintendents who were interviewed to review and double check findings from the research conducted and to help identify the presence of personal bias and misunderstandings. The superintendent was allowed to double check transcribed notes from the interview to allow a chance for clarification to occur if needed.

Lastly the researcher will kept an audit trail of findings throughout the study. An audit trail helps describe in detail “how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made through inquiry” (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). Richards (2005) writes that “good qualitative research gets much of its claim to validity from the researcher’s ability to show convincingly how they got there, and how they built confidence that this was the best account possible” (p. 143). In order to construct this trail, the researcher kept a research journal while conducting interviews, observations and document analysis. The researcher wrote down reflections, questions, and decisions made in regards to problems, issues, or ideas encountered during the data collection process. The researcher will also keep a running record of interactions with the data during the analysis portion of the study as well.

Definition of Terms

Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARM) - a mortgage having an interest rate which is usually initially lower than that of a mortgage with a fixed rate but is adjusted periodically according to the cost of funds to the lender (Webster's Online-Dictionary, as retrieved from <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org>, February, 2013).

Categorical Programs - This term refers to state aid that is designated for specific programs. Examples would be transportation aid, special education aid, and aid for vocational education. Equalization formula aid is not an example of categorical aid. Formula funds provide general aid that can be used for any purpose (Odden & Picus, 1992).

Collateralize - to make (a loan) secure with collateral (Webster's Online-Dictionary, as retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collateralize>, December, 2013).

Collateralization is the act where a borrower pledges an asset as recourse to the lender in the event that the borrower defaults on the initial loan. Collateralization of assets gives lenders a sufficient level of reassurance against default risk. (Investopedia, as retrieved from <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/collateralization.asp>, December, 2013).

Consumer Price Index (CPI) - an index measuring the change in the cost of typical wage-earner purchases of goods and services expressed as a percentage of the cost of these same goods and services in some base period (Webster's Online-Dictionary, as retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consumer%20price%20index>, December, 2013).

Deregulation - the act or process of removing restrictions and regulations.

(Webster's Online-Dictionary, as retrieved from <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org>, April, 2013).

Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) - A property's valuation after county and state equalization are performed. The term is applied to both individual properties and the total property within a school district or unit of government (Fritts, 2004).

Ethics - an attempt to impose reason, it is a process of inserting objectivity between thought and action. It is a process by which to judge oneself and one's actions in conjunction with and in relationship to others (Kidder, 1995).

Fixed Rate Mortgages (FRM) - A mortgage that has a fixed interest rate for the entire term of the loan. The distinguishing factor of a fixed-rate mortgage is that the interest rate over every time period of the mortgage is known at the time the mortgage is originated. The benefit of a fixed-rate mortgage is that the homeowner will not have to contend with varying loan payment amounts that fluctuate with interest rate movements (http://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fixed-rate_mortgage.asp, April, 2013).

Flat grant - Funds granted to a school district based strictly on enrollment with no intent of providing equalization (Brimley & Garfield, 2005).

Foreclosure - a legal proceeding that bars or extinguishes a mortgagor's right of redeeming a mortgaged estate (Webster's Online-Dictionary, as retrieved from <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org>, February, 2013).

Foundation Level Formula - The required local tax effort is applied to the local property tax base. State aid per pupil is the difference between the foundation per-pupil

expenditure level and the per-pupil revenues raised by the required local tax rate (Odden & Picus, 1992).

Foundation Program - A foundation program is a state equalization aid program that typically guarantees a certain foundation level of expenditure for each student, together with a minimum tax rate that each school district must levy for education purposes. The difference between what a local school district raises at the minimum tax rate and the foundation expenditure is made up in state aid. In the past, foundation programs were referred to as minimum foundation programs, and the foundation level of expenditure was quite low (Odden & Picus, 1992).

General State Aid (GSA) - General State Aid (GSA) funding for the support of educational services. GSA represents approximately 66% of state funds for elementary and secondary education (Illinois State Board of Education, as retrieved from www.ISBE.net, February, 2013).

General State Aid Formula - The GSA Formula is a foundation approach with three separate calculations, depending on the amount of property wealth of the local school district. For the majority of districts the equalization portion of the grant is distributed by the Foundation formula: $(\text{Foundation Level} - \text{Local Resources per Pupil}) \times \text{Number of Students}$ (Illinois State Board of Education, as retrieved from www.ISBE.net, February, 2013).

Great Recession - The Great Recession is the global financial crisis of 2007 that cast its long shadow on the economic fortunes of many countries (Verick, 2010).

High School District - A school district organized and established for the purpose of providing instruction in grades 9-12. The foundation level formula came to be known as general state aid, and categorical funding (105 ILCS 5/11 E-10).

Per Pupil Expenditure - The gross operating cost of a school district (excepting summer school, adult education, bond principal retired, and capital expenditures) divided by the nine-month ADA for the regular school term (Illinois State Board of Education, as retrieved from www.ISBE.net, February, 2013).

Predatory Lending - predatory lending is a welfare-reducing provision of credit. Lenders profit if they can tempt households into over borrowing and delinquency (Morgan, 2007).

Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) - The Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) limits the amount of tax extensions (total taxes billed) for non-home rule taxing districts. Although the law is commonly referred to as “tax caps,” use of this phrase can be misleading. The PTELL does not “cap” either individual property tax bills or individual property assessments. Instead, the PTELL allows a taxing district to receive a limited inflationary increase in tax extensions on existing property, plus an additional amount for new construction, and voter-approved rate increases. The limitation slows the growth of property tax revenues to taxing districts when property values and assessments are increasing faster than the rate of inflation. As a whole, property owners have some protection from tax bills that increase only because the market value of their property is rising rapidly. Increases in property tax extensions are limited to the lesser of 5% or the increase in the consumer price index for the year

preceding the levy year. The limitation for a taxing district can be increased with voter approval (Illinois Revenue, as retrieved from <http://www.Tax.Illinois.Gov>, June 2013).

Subprime - having or being an interest rate that is higher than a prime rate and is extended especially to low-income borrowers (Webster's Online-Dictionary, as retrieved from <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org>, February, 2013).

Subprime Mortgage Crisis -beginning in 2007, the Subprime Mortgage Crisis is characterized by an unusually large fraction of subprime mortgages originated in 2006 and 2007 becoming delinquent or in foreclosure only months later (Demyanyk & Otto Van, 2011).

Tax rate - The amount of property tax dollars to be paid annually per \$100 in equalized assessed valuation (Brimley & Garfield, 2005).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the literature surrounding superintendents' leadership, the effects of the 2008 financial recession, and the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique. These topics will be explored in detail in order to provide the appropriate context to answer the following research questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?
 - a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?
2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique in what lenses did the superintendents ground their decision making?

4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

Superintendents' Leadership

Roles and Responsibilities of a Superintendent

The most important position within a school district is the role of the superintendent. As the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the district, the superintendent works together with the board of education to make decisions for the school district (Campbell et al., 1990). Superintendents must orchestrate all resources, both human and material, to fulfill the school district's mission and to realize its vision (Haddick, 2008). Research shows that school superintendents' leadership has a significant impact on student achievement (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Therefore the school superintendent must be well prepared and possess the necessary leadership skills to empower the people within the school district to carry out the school mission in all that they do.

Superintendents must possess a wide range of knowledge and skill sets in order to effectively run their school district. Carter and Cunningham (1997) explain that

Superintendents must be well grounded: from solid pedagogy to financial management, from child growth and development to political acumen, and from organizational and group behavior to staff development and student personnel. The superintendent must be knowledgeable in matters pertaining to instructional options: application of the most promising research, assessment, and evaluation; and allocation of human, financial and material resources. (p. 3)

However, prior to the application of this knowledge and skills, the superintendent must understand and be able to adapt to the highly political nature of the job. "Understanding linkages between communities and schools in a democratic society as well as the political dynamics between school board members and district chief executive officers is essential

to effective leadership” (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005, p. 47). Superintendents work closely with elected officials, special interest groups, and board of education members who expect them to be responsive to public needs and demands, to make intelligent political decisions, to be good problem solvers, to be fiscally responsible, and to generate voter support for school bond issues (Blumberg, 1985).

Composition of a Superintendent

At the administrative level of superintendent, race and gender is limited in its diversity. Nationally superintendents have been described as primarily white middle aged males (Bell, 1988; Brunner, 1998, 1999, 2007; Chase, 1995; Durflinger & Maki, 2007; Glass, 2000; Grogan, 1999). Given that research indicates that 75% of K-12 teachers are females and 62% are white, the difference in gender and demographics may present superintendents with some leadership challenges along the way (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000).

Although the superintendency is a white male dominated role, research shows that nationally the percentage of female superintendents has significantly increased since 1992. A study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators in 2010 indicated that the percentage of women in this field has grown from 13.2% to 24.1% in a span of ten years (Kowalski et al., 2011). “The average superintendent spends more than fifty hours a week at work including night meetings and sporting events” (p. 1). This has proven to be a factor that is reflected in the lower percentage of women in the role of a superintendent. “Women administrators recognize that the time and pressure of the superintendency frequently interferes with family life and choose to spend non-working time with family rather than school board members and citizens” (Glass, 2000, p. 28).

In 2007 research indicated that the average Illinois superintendent was a white male, 52 years of age who had been in education for 28 years, and had been in his current role as a superintendent for eight years. The average level of education was a Certificate of Advanced Study or an Education Specialist degree. Minorities and female superintendents were more prevalent at the elementary level (Durflinger & Maki, 2007; Kellner, 2013). Similar results were found in a 2008 study conducted by the Illinois Association of School Boards. With a response rate of 47%, the results also concluded that the majority of Illinois superintendents were white males and the average age was 50 years old or older.

Table 1

Demographics

Personal Characteristics by District Type	Percentage by District Type			
	Unit N= 62	High School N= 11	Elementary N= 41	Total N= 127
Gender				
Male	81.7	90.9	70.7	78.8
Female	18.3	9.1	29.3	21.2
Ethnic Background				
Caucasian	98.2	100.0	89.5	95.2
African-American	0.0	0.0	5.3	1.9
American Indian	0.0	0.0	2.6	1.0
Latino	0.0	0.0	2.6	1.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.0
Level of Education				
Masters Plus	6.6	0.0	12.2	8.0
Certificate of Advanced Study	68.9	40.0	36.6	54.9
Doctorate	24.6	60.0	51.2	37.2

Source: Durflinger & Maki, 2007.

The pressures, responsibilities and amount of hours spent on the job as a superintendent are none to be taken lightly and unfortunately have led to a historically small tenure. In the early nineties, the national school boards association suggested that the average term of a large district superintendent was 2.5 years (Illinois Association of School Boards, 1992). However, recent findings from the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), stated that the average tenure of urban superintendents increased from 2.3 years in 1999 to 3.6 years in 2010 (Pascopella, 2011). Based on recent research found in the American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study, a key element in running a successful district is stability. In order to establish reforms or create programs that make a difference the length of time a superintendent spends in his or her position does matter and has an impact on student achievement (Kowalski et al., 2011). Educating board of education members on how to effectively evaluate superintendents will play an important role in the continued increase of a superintendent's tenure (Pascopella, 2011).

Route to Achieve Superintendency

Research indicates that most superintendents follow the traditional career path to the superintendency. The majority began their career as a teacher and then transitioned into a building level administrative position, most of which have been assistant principal positions rather than principal jobs (Kowalski et al., 2011). Many individuals seeking a superintendent's certification are in mid-career, in their mid-thirties to forties and are married with family obligations. Balancing work, family and school obligations often results in a part time superintendent preparation enrollment, which extends the preparation for superintendency over several years. And although the cliental in

superintendent preparation programs are often faced with limitations on the amount of time they are able to dedicate to the program, research indicates that more and more superintendents have been pursuing advanced graduate degrees over the past 30 years (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Superintendent preparation programs are often viewed as extensions of principal preparation program even though the nature of the work is quantitatively different (Hoyle et al., 2005). Over the past several decades, critics have labeled educational administration programs as “seriously deficient” and have blamed them for inadequately preparing school and district leaders (Achielles, 1988; Thompson, 1989, p. 372). States began to recognize that without effective leaders school districts will not meet demanding requirements for improving achievement (Wilhoit, 2008). Therefore based on information from surveys and suggestions from numerous educational scholars and associations, action has been taken to improve the preparation of educational leaders.

Professional standards for school leaders were developed and updated throughout the years to provide guidance for state policymakers to improve education leadership preparation, licensure, evaluation, and professional development (Wilhoit, 2008). The Educational Leadership Policy Standards often referred to as ISLLC 2008, “reflect the new information and lessons learned about educational leadership over the past decade” (Wilhoit, 2008, p. 1). These standards organize the functions that help define strong school leadership and represent the broad, essential themes that school leaders must address in their leadership and decision-making in order to promote the academic success of each student.

The six superintendent standards include:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context (Wilhoit, 2008).

Just as we hold students accountable for reaching a variety of content standards that prove they have mastered certain skills or concepts as a learner, school leaders are also held to certain expectations to help prove their effectiveness as a leader. Since the leadership and decision-making of a superintendent has a direct impact on student achievement it is essential to have standards in place to serve as the foundation to adequately prepare as well as measure the success of their leadership.

Superintendent as a Financial Leader

Specifically relating to ISLLC 2008 standard three, superintendents are viewed as the financial leaders within their district, and must obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to make effective decisions regarding the management of their districts' financial resources. It is essential for the success of superintendents that they exhibit a

clear understanding of the different aspects of school finance including “data management, budget creation, budget management, legal aspects of managing resources, and problem solving” (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 96). The ability to accurately predict the revenue available to the district and the cost data regarding all program elements in the district will help maintain efficient operations of schools.

When the sources of revenue are reliable and consistent from year to year and appropriately managed by the superintendent and board of education, the role as the ‘financial leader’ may come as easy to superintendents. However as school budgets begin to shrink, tough decisions need to be made, and the fiscal responsibility of a superintendent is truly put to the test. According to Carter and Cunningham (1997)

One of the most prevalent causes of short term tenure for superintendents is reaction to massive budget cuts. A slowing economy, state cutbacks, tax decreases, proportionate and regressive taxes, and local demands to do more for less reduce already tight budgets and require superintendents to achieve the impossible regarding budget management. When communities realize that it cannot be done, it is often the superintendent who is (incorrectly) blamed for failure. (p. 84)

In many cases budget cuts cannot be avoided and superintendents are ultimately faced with the challenges of deciding what the best decisions are to avoid negatively affecting students.

A key role in the survival of a superintendent during tough financial times is communication with the key stake holders in the district. “Sometimes financial problems arise not from the management of the budget but inadequate communication about the budget to the community and staff (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 101). Open communication about the financial health of the school district helps to preserve the community and staff confidence and respect in their school district’s leadership during times of doubt.

As the steward of a school districts financial operation it is essential that superintendents have a clear understanding of both the fundamental aspects of school finance as well as the ability to effectively communicate with key stakeholders. The capability to excel in directing and planning yearly financial operations and communicate that information is most important when facing difficult choices as a result of poor economic conditions. Additionally, superintendents can utilize historical information to gain perspective on how the public funding structure has evolved over time in order to understand their current situation and place for the future. Illinois has a long history of public funding that provides superintendents with a perspective to lead in today's economic conditions.

Illinois Public Funding

A Historical Background

The Northwest Land Ordinances. The Land Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 were the first pieces of federal legislation passed that constituted the charters of the public school system in the United States (Belting, 1919). One of the key provisions in the 1785 legislation was to divide the land acquired by Britain following the Revolutionary War, and establish townships composed of 36 sections (Brimley & Garfield, 2005). A provision of this act required that section 16 of the 36 square blocks be set aside for the maintenance of public schools. Many of these sections were sold to raise funds for public education (Kersten, 2012). The land ordinance called the Northwest Ordinance was passed in 1787. Article three of this ordinance reads “religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools, and the means of education shall be forever encouraged” (Brimley & Garfield, 2005, p. 176).

This provided a foundation to establishing priority for public education beyond the original thirteen states and also a property basis for school funding (Alexander & Alexander, 2005).

The funds derived from the land grants provided states the means necessary to establish and operate schools while their tax structures were under development (Brimley & Garfield, 2005). Congress required Illinois to add a provision into the state constitution reflecting the legislation of the Land Ordinances of 1785 and 1787. The Illinois state constitution reads “the section numbered sixteen in every township and when such section has been sold, or otherwise disposed of, other lands equivalent thereto, and as contiguous as may be, shall be granted for the use of schools” (Illinois Constitution, 1970). This provision within the state constitution provided Illinois with the funds necessary to establish their first public schools. In Illinois, the administration of the land grants was by townships or subdivisions of them, and managed by the local county of commissioners in each county who were elected by the people (Belting, 1919).

In the early 1800’s there was much debate regarding slavery in the state of Illinois. Two key leaders that helped abolish slavery in Illinois were Governor Coles and General Duncan. These men saw an extreme importance of educating the children of the state on the evils of slavery in free schools provided by the state in order to insure the future of the state and Republic (Belting, 1919). In January of 1825, Governor Coles and General Duncan helped pass the Free School Legislation which required counties to maintain one or more free public schools within its boundaries to white citizens, ages 5 to 21 (Hickrod, Hubbard, & Elder, 1987). The legislation also permitted local authorities to tax property in support of public schools (Herget, 1979).

Free School Law in Illinois. The Free School Law of 1825 resulted in property taxation becoming a major resource for public school funding. Section 15 of the Free School law states:

Be it further enacted, that for the encouragement and support of schools respectively established within this State according to this act, there shall be appropriated for that purpose two dollars out of every hundred thereafter to be received in the Treasury of this State. Also five sixths of the interest arising from the school fund; which shall be divided annually between the different counties of this State in proportion to the number of white inhabitants in each county under the age of twenty-one years after the next census shall be taken; until which time no such dividend shall take place. (Blair, 1925, p. 34)

According to Herget (1979), “voters in local school districts were empowered to tax themselves, either in cash or good merchantable produce, provided that the yearly levy did not exceed ten dollars. Additionally, two percent of net taxes and the interest generated by the state to be appropriated for local school use and deposited into the school fund” (p. 131). The Illinois law required revenues from the School Fund to be distributed to all districts with a public school in operation for at least three months during the school year (Laws of Illinois, 1824-1825).

Serious opposition to the Free School Law had developed shortly after it was passed in 1825 (Herget, 1979). The opposition to this law was created because there was a great resistance to the local taxing authority amongst the people in Illinois. “Even the poorest men preferred to pay all that was necessary for the tuition of their children, or to keep them in ignorance, rather than submit to the mere name of a tax by which the wealthier neighbors bore the brunt of the expense of their education” (Ford, 1945, p. 71). Additionally, taxpayers without children in school were opposed to paying the tax for other children to attend school (Belting, 1919). Most importantly, the government was

unable to provide any evidence that schools were financially supported through the school fund. “There are no published records of the treasurer showing that any money was appropriated out of the state funds for the support of free school in any district under the law of 1825” (p. 101).

Due to the immense resistance to this law, a special committee met shortly after to discuss the continuation of the Free School Law (Senate Journal, 1826). In 1827, the Free School Law was amended so that one could be taxed only by his own consent for the support of schools (Belting, 1919). It required that no person could be taxed without his consent in writing (Haig, 1914). Section three of the amendment states, “No person shall hereafter be taxed for the support of any free school in this state, unless it be his or her own free will and consent, first had and obtained in writing” (Belting, 1919, p. 105). This provision established in 1827 was the precursor to what is now known as a school referendum (Evans, 2011).

Over the next few years the Free School Law of 1825 was explicitly amended and new laws were created, changing the Free School Law’s original intent back to the ways it was before 1825, which was seen as an affair of voluntary union and subscription (Laws of Illinois, 1829). The provision that originally established statewide support of school funds was essentially eliminated (Herget, 1979). “Provision existed by law, nevertheless, through which the people of a locality could organize themselves into school districts and might tax themselves by consent, but they could receive no share of the public funds under the control of the state because the two percent clause of the law of 1825 had been repealed in 1829” (Belting, 1919, p. 105). Essentially the burden of funding public education was shifted back to the local taxpayers because the 1829

legislation relied more heavily on local revenue as a major source of funding (Herget, 1979).

A Need for Change – The Introduction of Equalization

Illinois legislators worked hard over the next few years to reform school funding. Many statutes were passed that lessened the taxing power of school districts, but none sufficient enough to create an equitable, effective statewide system of funding (Herget, 1979). It was not until 1855 that Illinois legislators created a statewide system that would provide extensive financial state assistance to school districts. The Free School Act of 1855 imposed a state tax for education. According to Belting (1919):

The tax amounted to two mills on the dollar and was added in the distribution to other funds which made up the common school fund supplement. The common school fund of this state shall consist of such sums as will be produced by an annual levy and assessment of two mills upon each dollar's valuation of all taxable property in the state. (p. 145)

The funds were distributed to county commissioners who then re-distributed these funds to Illinois school districts based upon the number of schools and students in the district (Herget, 1979).

This legislation also allowed Illinois school districts to supplement the funds received through their local taxing authority contributing additional revenue toward funding their own school district (Hickrod, Hubbard, & Elder, 1987). “The board of education of any district shall be authorized to levy and collect a tax annually on all property in their district” (Belting, 1919, p. 146). It was soon realized that this additional source of revenue created inequity issues amongst school districts throughout the state. Educational experts pointed out that the financial organization of districts worked well in large city districts rather than extremely rural areas because schools had access to more

property tax revenues because of their larger tax bases. Additionally more taxpayers in urban areas were more willing than those in rural areas to tax themselves for public education (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; Isenberg, 1969; Odden & Picus, 1992).

The heavy dependence upon local funding created inequalities in educational support among local school districts. “When local resources are the main support for education, wealthier districts had considerably a greater potential for superior educational services and poor districts had less potential for superior educational services” (Hickrod, 1987, p. 2). With the disparity in wealth amongst various communities came an inconsistency in the local school district’s ability to fund public education, and the beginnings of the movement toward equalization (Updegraff, 1922).

Similar to Illinois, public school systems across the nation had adopted the issue of state funding. By 1890, all the states in the Union had tax-supported public education systems (Brimley & Garfield, 2005). Almost all children all over the country were being provided with a free public education. However many children unfortunately were also feeling the negative effects of the inconsistent educational funding amongst local districts. For example, many urban school districts provided instruction for eight or nine months, while many rural districts could only afford to keep their schools open for three or four months a year (Johns, 1973).

State legislators quickly began to recognize the need to equalize funding opportunities. This led to an increase in attention to providing school districts with state aid that would supplement the revenues provided to school districts by property taxes. The goal in providing additional aid would be to provide equal resources to all children regardless of the school district in which they resided (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; Odden

& Picus, 2008). The argument of equality and pressure for change was placed on legislators throughout the state. Over the next several years new ideas and detailed plans surfaced to help equalize the funding inequities and were applied in local school districts. Ideas included the creation of the flat grant, the foundation level formula, which came to be known as general state aid, and the categorical funding program (see definitions in glossary for further information). While these newly developed concepts did not ultimately solve the inequity issues amongst school districts within the state of Illinois, these concepts provided the foundation for today's system of supplying state aid funding to supplement local revenues.

Federal Funding Support

While local and state revenues continue to provide the primary source of education funding, the federal government does provide funding primarily through support of specific federal educational programs. According to the tenth amendment of United States Constitution our founding fathers delegated legal authority of education to the states not the federal government. "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by the States, are reserved to the states, or to the people" (Yudof, Kirp, & Levin, 1992, p. 841). Therefore all states were able to create their own unique public education systems through their individual state constitutions as long as they were within the parameters of the federal law (Kersten, 2012). This is historically why the Federal government has less influence on educational funding than the state.

As the federal government does not have direct authority over educational funding, their main focus to impact education at the national level is through passing legislation directly linked to federal funding (Kersten, 2012). "Generally the greater

interest at the federal level comes when a perceived national need is identified and the federal establishment reacts to that need” (Brimley & Garfield, 2005, p. 207). The Federal government establishes programs and provides the revenues for those programs to address those needs at a national level. In order to receive federal funds, states and school districts are required to follow certain requirements established by the federal government (Kersten, 2012). “Common to all these perceived needs is the overriding element of finance; how much, what for, where the funds should go, what strings should be attached, and how much control and accountability would be required” (Brimley & Garfield, 2008, p. 208).

Until the last quarter century, the federal government's financial assistance was tied to defense and training for specific fields that was not present in schools in early America, such as vocational education (Jones, 1984). In the 1960s, the focus shifted toward the concept of equal opportunity for all establishing programs for initiatives that included both regulatory and funding aspects. These funded programs were for handicapped children, preschoolers, children of poverty, immigrants and non-English speaking students (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; Fritts, 2002; Jones, 1984). “Education financing soared in the mid-sixties, as the federal government targeted funds for special groups of students and encouraged states to share those national priorities through regulations and financing techniques” (Jones, 1984, p. 1).

It has been said that “federal aid was given without federal control” in the 20th century, however this mindset changed with the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in the 21st century (Brimley & Garfield, 2005, p. 209). The federal government saw a national need to close the achievement gap of certain socioeconomic

and racial populations of students and passed the NCLB law (“Federal Role in Education,” 2012). This mandate raised the question of whether or not the Federal government had the power to withhold funds if a state did not comply with the new federal mandates. During this time, there began a growing concern about the expansion and impact of the role of federal government on local schools.

The Decline of Local Control

Local school districts are referred to as political subdivisions of the state and must follow the mandates set by state legislatures and are required to operate within the state constitutional provisions (Kowalski, 1999). Local control of school districts is run by the board of education whose primary purpose is to provide local citizen control over education by representing all citizens within the district. The local school boards set educational goals based upon state laws and community values and are responsible for employing a superintendent to lead the district towards the accomplishments of these goals (Illinois Association of School Boards, 2012).

Although constitutional provisions, state statutes, regulations, policies, and federal statutes impact and limit board decision-making, local school boards still have a significant amount of power in making educational decisions with regard to raising revenue through property taxes, managing school property, employing personnel, and influencing instructional programs (Hoyle et al., 2005). However, the role of local school boards in controlling and administering the operation and financing of schools has changed in the last few years.

One weakness of local control of fiscal operations is that local school districts vary greatly in their access to taxable resources (Brimley & Garfield, 2008). Since local

school districts depend largely on property tax revenues for financing their districts education, local tax requirements often place substantial burdens on some local property taxpayers. This often results in an increased pressure from community members to maintain low tax rates and the lack of appropriate revenue to maintain a quality level of education (Brimley & Garfield, 2005).

One way to help provide proper educational services for students in districts that struggle financially is through consolidation. Consolidation is “the merging of the territory of two or more existing districts to form a new district” (Skarr & Spanglo, 1996, p. 54). School district consolidation has been around since 1899 with the first consolidation petition in 1903 (Illinois State Board of Education, 1993). In 1919, a voluntary consolidation act was passed in Illinois providing a procedure for merger of districts, consolidation of debts, and a selection of a new governing board (Herget, 1979). However, this attempt to equalize resources received little response from the people until they were forced to consolidate during the hard times of the 1930's because the shortage of tax revenues and capital funds sharply reduced construction of new facilities and because the pressure to reduce expenditures, led community officials to a careful assessment of school district operations (Herget, 1979).

Consolidation of smaller financially strapped school districts provides students increased educational opportunities and the fiscal practicality to provide a quality education. Research indicates that for high school students, school size can make a difference in both achievement and in the number of academic courses offered to students (Illinois State Board of Education, 1993). Based on research findings, “one of the chief advantages to consolidation is an increase in curricular opportunity and added academic

competition and curricular quality” (Gilliland, 2008, p. 121). Monk and Haller (1986) suggest that in larger schools students have more extracurricular options to choose from and teachers would have more opportunities for professional development to improve the quality of their teaching.

Illinois has encouraged school districts to merge by offering financial incentives to small rural schools that choose to consolidate. Illinois has established the following fiscal incentives for reorganization:

If, in its first year of existence, a new district qualifies for less state aid than would have been available that same year to the previously existing districts, a supplemental payment equal to the difference will be made for three years. In the first year only, a supplementary state aid payment will be made equal to the combined deficits of the previously existing districts; however, if the sum of the fund balances in all districts is positive, no payment will be made. For any consolidation, the state will pay, for three years, an amount equal to the differences in salaries earned in the year prior to the formation of the new district and the salaries of employees in the new district. (Hall, McCaw, Philhower, Pierson, 2004, p. 10)

The number of school districts has declined since this incentive option was introduced. In 1983 there were 1,010 Illinois school districts (Hall et al., 2004) and in 2012 Illinois had 868 school districts (“Yes, Classrooms First,” 2012). In Governor Pat Quinn’s budget address in 2012, he stated “Illinois should greatly reduce the number of school districts in the state. Illinois has 868 school districts, more than almost any other state. That creates a lot of unnecessary expense through duplication of services and we are long overdue for a downsizing” (“Governor Quinn Delivers Budget Address,” 2012, p. 1). He estimated that if Illinois scaled down to about 300 districts, the state would save \$100 million in administrator salaries (“Governor Quinn Delivers Budget Address,” 2012).

Although the consolidation of schools may be the more efficient option, it has added to the decline of local control over education. Additionally, the decision-making power by local districts has declined due to the increased dependence upon state and federal funding (Fritts, 2002). Herget states (1979):

The state and federal standards aimed toward “improvement” in educational programs has essentially removed much initiative from local boards. These twentieth-century changes have unmistakably altered the role and importance of the school district, while leaving it intact as a formal institution. The change appears to be part of a general movement from democracy to bureaucracy, toward “modernization” of governmental and legal systems whereby decision-making is placed at ever higher levels in order to insure uniformity of policy. The trend has apparently not adversely affected the achievement of the principal goal of early educational efforts - making free, publicly financed education available to all - but the fundamental function of the district itself, implying local control and local financing, has been seriously eroded. (p. 138)

The support for local control maintains that issues such as curriculum, budget, personnel, facilities and policies governing school operations are best decided by each community for its schools and often leads to favoring the status quo rather than succumbing to greater state funding and federal control (Fritts, 2002).

Regardless of the state and federal impacts on local control, as the leader of the local school district, the superintendent should always work to provide the best educational opportunities for the students. The superintendent needs to exemplify an understanding of the different Federal and State financial mechanisms in order to appropriately and efficiently manage the budget of their school district with the goal of providing the most quality educational experience for their student body (2008 ISLLC Standard Six). Additionally the superintendent serves as the steward of the local community and when necessary have the opportunity to influence and direct local funding initiatives. It is essential for the superintendent to have a clear understanding of

all sources of revenue for their school district and to be able to evaluate risks and opportunities when faced with challenges that could be detrimental to the overall educational experience.

Sources of Revenue for Illinois School Districts

Illinois superintendents have a professional responsibility to “exhibit an understanding of school finance, including data management, budget creation, budget management, legal aspects of managing resources and problem solving” (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 82). They need to be well versed on where the sources of revenue come from that fund their district in order to accurately project future expenditures. “The superintendent must be able to predict with some accuracy the revenue available to the district and the cost data regarding all program elements in the district. Accurate projections and decisions about use of funds for programs, salaries, support programs, and operations depend on sound revenue predictions” (p. 97). The law requires Illinois school districts to prepare an annual budget by designated dates including in it specific information on anticipated revenues and expenditures for the coming year (Fritts, 2002).

When designing a comprehensive financial plan for an Illinois school district the superintendent must have a clear understanding of the various current federal, state, and local revenue sources utilized to fund general operations. Although these revenue sources come in different quantities, some larger than other, they are all equally important as every dollar of revenue is important to provide quality educational services.

The majority of school revenues at the local level are attributable to property taxes (Fritts, 2008; Skarr & Spangnolo, 1996). “The largest single source of Illinois public education funding is the property tax” (Kersten, 2012, p. 9). Even though property

values have declined since 2008 due to the economic downturn driven by the housing crises, property taxes are still a stable source of revenue when compared to alternative sources (Fleck, 2010). The property tax consists of the real estate tax which is the tax on homeowners and businesses. “The amount of money a school district can realize from the tax on property is determined by two factors: the total assessed value of all taxable property in the district and the school districts authorized tax rate” (“Understanding School Finance,” 2012, p. 8). In school districts that have high property tax values within their district boundaries, property tax revenues cover a large portion of expenses. However, school districts that have low property tax values within their boundaries need to rely heavily on additional sources of revenue (Kersten, 2012).

Tax rates also play a role in determining the amount of individual school boards local revenue (Brimley & Garfield, 2005; Fritts, 2002; Kersten, 2012). Tax rate is defined as the percentage at which property is taxed and is determined by the total amount of taxes levied by the board of education (Kersten, 2012). The State of Illinois sets the maximum tax rate and can only be raised above this maximum with the voter’s approval at a local referendum (“Understanding School Finance,” 2012). To protect homeowners whose property values were increasing faster than the rate of inflation, the property tax extension limitation law (PTELL) was enacted in 1991 to help slow the growth of revenues to taxing districts (Illinois Department of Revenue, 2012). The Property Tax Code statute (35 ILCS 200/18 185 through 35 ILCS 200/18 245), requires that “non-home rule taxing districts in PTELL counties limit the annual increase in property tax extensions to the lesser of five percent or the increase in the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers” (Illinois School Code, 2010). Property owners now

received some protection from tax bills that increase only because the market value of their property was rising rapidly (Illinois Department of Revenue, 2012).

The Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) also plays a role in the funding of Illinois school districts. Until 1979, Illinois law allowed the taxation of the personal property of business. This was eliminated and replaced with an alternative tax on Illinois businesses known as the corporate personal property replacement tax (Fritts, 2002; Vazquez & Gidwitz, 2002). The CPPRT is a state tax on either income or invested capital, on some businesses to restore lost revenue from the elimination of the personal property tax on corporations, partnerships, and on other business entities (Illinois Department of Revenue, 2011; Kersten, 2012). Local taxing bodies are provided with the proceeds of this tax in the amount relative to the share of personal property taxes received by these local taxing bodies prior to 1970 (Vazquez & Gidwitz, 2002).

Interest through investment income is also a source of local funding. “School districts always maintain some reserve funds for cash flow purposes to ensure that they have sufficient dollars available to pay bills and meet their payrolls while waiting for state aid and property tax revenues to arrive” (Kersten, 2012, p. 21). School reserves must be kept at low-risk which includes short term financial investment vehicles including certificates of deposit and government securities (Braun, 2010). Additionally, districts require specific collateral requirements for the deposit of public funds based on the Illinois State Treasurer standards to protect the funds against failure of the banking institution (Illinois State Treasurer, 2012). Although interest income used to be a significant source of revenue for school districts, over the past five to ten years interest

rates have dropped significantly therefore resulting in little income acquired by interest (Schilling & Tomal, 2013).

On the smaller scale, local user based fees also generate revenue for Illinois public school districts. “Student fees have been litigated in many states around the notion of what constitutes a free public education. While there is recognition that low income or indigent students should not be required to pay fees, nonetheless they are an important revenue stream for many school districts” (Schilling & Tomal, 2013, p. 60). Local user based fees include; school textbooks, yearbooks, and activity fees, student fines, student technology fee’s, driver education fee’s, building rental fees, etc. (Kersten, 2012). Kersten states that “fee increases in financially strapped school districts are often viewed by those without children in school as a preferable option to increasing revenue since those who benefit directly are only affected” (p. 21).

“The primary source of revenue on the state level is general and categorical state aid” (Schilling & Tomal, 2013, p. 63). General state aid is a source of funding provided to support the educational services of local Illinois school districts. The purpose of general state aid is “to provide general flexible state aid to schools in an equitable manner” (“General State Aid,” 2010, p. 1). The operating principle behind the Illinois general state aid formula is that school districts who have the least local wealth should receive the most amount of general state aid (Fritts, 2008; Skarr & Spagnolo, 1996).

Fritts (2002) states that:

The general state aid formula is designed to ensure that all students in Illinois have access to educational good and services valued at a basic “foundation level” or more. The foundation level represents the amount of dollars that state legislature believe should be available to educate each child. The foundation amount is funded from both state aid and local property taxes through a formula

that divides school districts by type into three segments, low wealth, high wealth, and moderate financial ability. (p. 24)

General state aid is distributed to the schools by the State Board of Education, and in order to receive this state aid, local school administrators must submit claims to the State Board, along with such information as average daily pupil attendance and equalized assessed value of all taxable property in the school district (“Understanding School Finance,” 2012). General state aid is distributed based upon a formula designed to equalize resources amongst schools in Illinois. The general state aid formula is a foundation approach with three separate calculations depending on the amount of property wealth of the local school district (“Understanding School Finance,” 2012).

Other major state financial assistance for schools is through categorical and special program grants and grants for school reform and improvement initiatives (Skarr & Spangnolo, 1996). School districts who meet specific requirements and complete the necessary paperwork receive this funding (Kersten, 2012). Special categorical state aid is money the state allocates for schools for special purposes and state mandated programs including special education, transportation, free lunch program, bilingual education, textbooks, adult education, and gifted and remedial student programs (Skarr & Spangnolo, 1996; “Understanding School Finance,” 2012).

Although federal funding for almost all Illinois school districts is not as substantial a source of school district revenue as are property taxes and state aid, it is nonetheless important for all school districts in this era of limited revenues and rising expenditures. Federal revenues are primarily given through grants and reimbursements from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Agriculture made to

state agencies (Skarr & Spagnolo, 1996). Most federal funds are distributed to the state in the form of a block grant and the amount received is based on student population and need. These funds are re-distributed to school districts in accordance with criteria and requirements they must follow (“Understanding School Finance,” 2012). School districts with larger economically disadvantaged student populations generally receive a larger proportion of need-based federal funding (Kersten, 2012). Additionally, the federal government uses a competitive grant process to promote particular initiatives. School districts have the option of applying for grants to supply the extra revenue needed to fund special programs within their district (Kersten, 2012).

It is the role of the superintendent and school board to both design and manage the overall funding structure of a school district utilizing the many funding sources. However, given so much of the funding sources rely on a strong tax base or direct government revenue an economic crisis can be very difficult to manage. “A slowing economy, state cutbacks, tax decreased, proportionate and regressive taxes and local demands to do more for less reduce already tight budgets and require superintendents to achieve the impossible regarding budget management. When communities realize that it cannot be done it is often the superintendent who is (incorrectly) blamed for failure” (Carter & Cunningham, 1997, p. 85). The 2008 financial crisis created this difficult situation for many superintendents in the state of Illinois.

Overview of the 2008 Financial Crisis

The 2008 Financial Crisis, often referred to as “the Great Recession,” is one of the most significant downward economic shifts in the history of the United States (Verick & Islam, 2010). While the causes of this financial crisis are difficult to pinpoint, drawing from comprehensive review crisis-related studies, a few core and interrelated factors can be identified as the root of the cause. These factors include regulation of the financial system, interest rates and perceptions of risks (Acharya & Richardson, 2009).

Some experts believe that the onset of the financial crisis can be attributed to different elements of deregulation in the financial markets (Stiglitz, 2009). Since the Great Depression United State banks have been among the most heavily regulated in the world creating a market in which the government and Federal Reserve Bank provided heavy influence (Barker, 2012). Economists would argue that regulation limits competition and thus provides inefficiencies in financial markets. The act of “deregulation” removes restrictions and thus theoretically allows a market to operate more efficiently with additional competition. Additionally, deregulation shifts some of the risk assessment checks and balances from the governing body to the private institution (Stiglitz, 2009).

In the late 1990’s the United States began a period of financial deregulation designed to enhance competition in the financial services industry. A key component of this deregulation was a new ability for commercial banks, investment banks and insurance companies to merge and provide services under one entity, something previously unavailable in the United States (Udell, 2009). This competition helped spur a period of unprecedented growth in the economy prior to the collapse. In conjunction with

deregulation in the financial markets, loosely written policy was also being created in important private markets such as ratings agencies and non-bank mortgage lending institutions (Stiglitz, 2009). Overall, the deregulation of the financial markets as well as the loose risk management policies of the private markets provided a foundation for the vigorous growth of the United States housing market. This dynamic growth of the housing market was the beginning of what is more commonly known as the 'Housing Bubble.' Research from the S&P/Case-Schiller Housing Price Index indicated that from 1997 to 2006, nominal U.S. housing prices rose 188% (S&P/Case-Schiller U.S. National Home Price Index). An economic bubble occurs when "trade is in high volumes at prices that are considerably at variance with intrinsic values" (Byun, 2010, p. 4). This time period is referred to as the housing bubble because there is evidence showing a pattern of unusual growth and falloff in demand for housing and an unprecedented rise and decline in real home prices (Byun, 2010).

There is much debate found in research on exactly when the housing bubble began or what caused it. According to some micro economists, it was caused by excessively easy monetary policy (Levitin & Wachter, 2010). Economist John Taylor argued that "the bubble was the result of the Federal Reserve holding interest rates too low for too long, resulting in artificially cheap mortgage credit and thereby stoking housing demand" (Levitin & Wachter, 2010, p. 4). Adding to the housing bubble is the issue that non-traditional loans were being granted more frequently to buyers with far less requirements for buyers to provide documentation to confirm that their income could support the mortgage payment (Olesiuk & Kalser, 2009). Furthermore, these loans were often granted to buyers requiring little or no down payment (Byun, 2010). Byun also

referenced that “mortgage-backed securities contributed because they increasingly financed these high-risk loans during this Housing bubble period” (p. 3).

From 2000-2003 many people chose to refinance using prime Fixed Rate Mortgages (FRM) because the interest rates were low which resulted in boosted business for mortgage companies. At the end of 2003, long-term interest rates had started to rise and people no longer were so eager to refinance their home. What this meant was that the mortgage industry was under pressure to maintain similar earnings levels from 2000-2003 (Levitin & Wachter, 2010). Mortgage companies needed to find more business in order to maintain origination quantities and hence earnings. “Because the prime borrowing pool was exhausted, it was necessary to lower underwriting standards and look to more marginal borrowers to support origination volume levels” (Levitin & Wachter, 2010, p. 23). This in turn resulted in the growth of subprime Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARM) amongst homebuyers.

Much of the growth in subprime ARMs was in nontraditional products such as interest-only mortgages payment-option mortgages, 40-year extended amortization balloons mortgages, or hybrid ARMS (Mayer, Pence, & Sherland, 2008). Borrowers were generally approved based on their ability to pay the initial below-market rate, rather than their ability to pay for the mortgage through its full term (Levitin & Wachter, 2010). This expansion of the borrower base and borrower capacity also increased demand for housing supply and resulted in increased housing prices. “As housing prices rose, non-traditional “affordability” products became increasingly attractive to borrowers who saw their purchasing power diminish” (Levitin & Wachter, 2010).

With adjustable rate mortgage products expanding the borrowing base in large quantity the housing supply and prices continued to drive higher (Levitin & Wachter, 2010). These subprime borrowers who utilized adjustable rate mortgages to finance their housing purchase were now faced with large balloon interest payments they were unable to service, forcing them to default on their loan (Stiglitz, 2009). These defaults led banks and other financial institutions to put homes into foreclosure in mass quantity. This action forced many houses back onto the market and intensified downward pressure on housing prices (Stiglitz, 2009). The housing market and the various financiers of subprime lending were now holding many foreclosed properties in which the outstanding debt was greater than the actual value.

For financial institutions highly leveraged in the housing market, the collapse proved incredibly costly. As subprime lenders began defaulting on their loans it caused a ripple effect throughout the financial community. Banks and financial institutions who sold and serviced loans directly were now the holders of loans consumers were unable to service and the connected property that was worth less than the remaining debt on the loans (Stiglitz, 2009). Additionally, banks and financial were also invested in collateralized debt obligations (CDOs) in which subprime mortgages were sold as a part of a much larger debt package (Verick & Islam, 2010). The underlying value of these assets was now worth far less than the original value on the balance sheet, causing many banks to fail and others to make dramatic shifts in their operations in order to stay in business (Verick & Islam, 2010).

The collapse of the housing market had additional implications on businesses connected to the industry. Businesses that depended heavily on residential construction

began to suffer large losses in employment, much greater than those in the overall economy (Byun, 2010). The demand for residential construction grew from supporting 5.5 million jobs in 1996, to 7.4 million jobs in 2005. As the housing market crashed, residential-construction-related employment fell to 4.5 million in 2008, accounting for only 3.0% of total U.S. jobs (Streitwieser, 2009). While construction companies were closest to the collapse numerous other industries, including wood, concrete, and cement manufacturing, as well as real estate and mortgage brokers saw significant declines in overall employment during the start of the recession (Byun, 2010). In 2009, the company Caterpillar, which employed more than 28,000 workers in Illinois and has 112,000 employees worldwide, announced their plans to cut 20,000 jobs with its company. As economies around the world toppled into recession it resulted in a significant drop in demand for the company's earthmovers, mining trucks and other equipment (Miller, 2009). Additionally, the growth of the housing market drove employment in numerous secondary industries, including home goods, home services, and construction equipment. These loosely connected industries also saw significant decline during the housing collapse (Byun, 2010).

While many private industries experienced significant declines in employment and revenue during the collapse of the housing marketing, public institutions, such as school districts, began to feel the burden of the significant economic change by way of the sharp decrease in housing values, and the abrupt stop of new home construction. Public schools rely heavily on tax revenue and government aid and these economic changes caused significant shifts to the overall funding structure. In Illinois the most adverse consequence of these shifts in funding occurred in school districts that relied the

most heavily on government funding. As the state government began delaying or halting the distribution of funding to school districts the students who were most in need were no longer receiving the appropriate level of financial support. This led to vast inequalities across the state. Because of these challenges brought on by the financial recession superintendents were forced to make difficult decisions on how to continue to improve student achievement with limited financial resources.

The Effects of the 2008 Financial Recession on School Districts

Up until 2008 the taxes generated from local properties were a very stable source of revenue for most school districts (Schilling & Tomal, 2013). However, since then the steep drop in housing prices and the halt of new construction, school districts throughout the nation have felt the effects of the economic recession. “The significant declines in housing prices caused by the Great Recession had a noticeable impact on local property tax revenues” (Dadayan, 2012, p. 6). In 2010, at the national level, about 29% of total K-12 funding was supported by local property taxes. Specifically, Illinois had one of the highest shares of K-12 revenue from property taxes at 49.9% (“School Finance: Federal, State, and Local K-12 School Finance Overview,” 2013). “A material decline in property values in an assessing jurisdiction produces a decline in the property tax base on which the tax is levied. If this decline is sustained, and the government cannot or chooses not to offset the decline in the tax base with an increase in the tax rate, then tax collections will drop as well” (Dadayan, 2012, p. 8).

The bursting of the housing bubble and a weakened labor market led to lowered property, income, and sales tax revenues which in turn led to the state and local governments inability to fully fund school districts (Chakrabarti & Setren, 2011). Since

the average Illinois school district receives 31% of its funding from state coffers, districts were directly impacted by the health of state budgets (Hull, 2010). “Cuts at the state level mean that local school districts have to either scale back the educational services they provide, raise more local tax revenue to cover the gap, or both” (Leachman & Mai, 2013, p. 1). Tomasian (2010) explains that “states are facing a protracted budget crisis like none seen in the last 30 years and perhaps not since the Great Depression” (p. 1).

To lessen the impact of decreased state and local funding, the federal government issued the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in 2009. “The overall goal for education in the ARRA is to stimulate the economy in the short term, while investing in education advancements to ensure the long-term economic health and success of our nation” (“Educational Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,” 2009, p. 10). This act provided approximately \$100 billion dollars to distribute emergency education funding to states and drive key school reforms. The ARRA restored 23% K-12 funding to the state of Illinois (“Educational Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,” 2009). According to the Council of Economic Advisers

The greatest impact of ARRA funding for education, has been in providing much-needed state fiscal relief. State budget relief has been especially important because states, which normally must end the year with a balanced budget, experienced budget gaps of up to 20 percent of their general funds at some point during the 2009 fiscal year. In response to these gaps, states were already raising taxes and reducing spending by the time the ARRA was passed. These actions not only placed further burdens on families already suffering from the recession and cut crucial services, but also directly contributed to the worsening of the downturn (“Educational Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,” 2009, p. 6).

Although Federal aid through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has lessened the impact of state budget shortfalls on education, the recession has driven down state

revenues by record proportions and this funding assistance did not last long (Ellerson, 2010; Johnson & Oliff, 2010).

Superintendents began responding to the recession immediately by cutting and trimming budget items that had the least impact on student achievement (Ellerson, 2011). Such cuts include “reducing central office administrative staff, eliminating nonessential travel, deferring maintenance, reducing consumable supplies, and adjusting school thermostats to save on heating and cooling costs” (Hull, 2010, p. 3). As the school districts continued to endure the recession increased and budget cuts carried over year to year, school districts faced increasingly more difficult budget cuts including programs and personnel, which ultimately affected student achievement (Ellerson, 2011). Hull (2010) explained that

By the 2010-11 school year most districts had to make cuts that affect students more directly. These cuts included: laying off teachers which increased class size, eliminating extracurricular activities, cutting courses that were not required for graduation, eliminating summer school, adopting a four day school week, eliminating field trips, cutting instructional programs, and cutting professional development for teachers and staff. (p. 1)

Personnel costs within a district represent approximately 80% or more of a school district's total budget (Schilling & Tomal, 2013), therefore personnel reductions were inevitable. “Education makes up the largest single item in state budgets, and spending cuts there have been deep and widespread” (Johnson & Oliff, 2010, p. 1). In a study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) of 875 school administrators across 49 states, including Illinois, the percentage of districts laying off personnel almost quadrupled between 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, growing from 8% to 31% (McCord & Ellerson, 2009). One option some school districts chose to help

minimize teacher layoffs was by freezing or cutting salaries (Hull, 2010). In order to do this the district officials work together with union representatives and must re-open the existing contract in a process called impact bargaining. “When changes in state or federal law, district policy, or district fiscal circumstances call for management actions that conflict with the existing agreement, the district can renegotiate specific elements of the contract with the union” (Hannaway & Rotherham, 2010, p. 34). Diane Rado and Bill Ruthhart from the Chicago tribune (2012) report that

For decades, public school teachers in the Chicago area and across the country have counted on that increase as money in the bank. It usually has been on top of other raises folded into complicated, multiyear salary packages that determine teacher pay hikes. But that largesse has begun to fade as school districts struggle with bleak finances and move to shift the status quo, creating uncertain and tumultuous times across the region. (p.1)

A guaranteed pay increase unfortunately is no longer the case for teachers. People all throughout school districts are feeling the negative effects of the 2008 financial recession.

The effect of state shortfalls in funding has also resulted in school districts seeking additional sources of local revenues by increasing student fee’s (Schilling & Tomal, 2013). Although the revenue obtained from student fees is viewed as relatively small, it is important to school districts during times of revenues shortfalls and expenditure increases (Kersten, 2012). Kersten states that “fee increases in financially strapped school districts are often viewed by those without children as the preferable option to increase revenues since those that benefit directly are only affected” (p.4). While the recession may cause school leaders to hike up student fees, its negative impact on the unemployment rate resulted in a larger number of students who would qualify for fee waivers. Illinois State law exempts students who qualify for a free lunch from paying

most other school-based fees (105 ILCS 5/10-20.13; Malone, 2009). “Nearly half of the 1.9 million Illinois students served through the program qualified for a free or reduced-price meal last fall, based on household size and income” (Malone, 2009, p. 2). In essence, school districts facing the most need to increase revenue are more likely to have a student population on fee waivers therefore resulting in an insignificant amount of additional revenue for school.

The 2008 financial recession has caused increased stress on our students. “Over the past two years, budget problems have led several states to loosen restrictions on class size, to stretch teaching staff farther and cut costs” (Shellenbarger, 2011, p. 1). A study of 10,700 first grade parents and teachers indicated that first graders whose teachers are exhausted or lack needed materials show more signs of stress. This study also indicated that students in more negative environments have more behavioral and emotional problems (Milkie & Warner, 2011). Not only are students feeling the effects of the recession at school, but school officials are also reporting additional stress on students is coming from the recession’s effects on their home life as well. Leslie Brody from the Chicago Tribune (2009) reported that

School psychologists and guidance counselors say they have seen a growing number of children struggling with stress due to their families' financial problems. A sense of crisis can bring deep anxiety or depression, especially if parents vent their aggravation, fight about money or switch school districts, experts say. While parental unemployment and bill collectors are familiar to children in poverty-stricken neighborhoods, they come as a harsh surprise to young people used to comfortable lifestyles. Add them to modern fears of terrorism and global warming, as well as the normal angst of adolescence, and you get an unnerving mix. (p. 1)

Continued emotional distress can negatively affect a students’ ability to learn (Goleman, 1997). Therefore, unfortunately, the 2008 financial recession is negatively impacting

student achievement, something superintendents nationwide have tried desperately to avoid.

The effects of the 2008 recession on school districts cannot be pinpointed on one specific cause. Stemming from the steep decline in housing prices and associated property taxes local revenues fail to reach projections. The overall decline of the economy and labor market resulted in lower income and sales tax leaving shortfalls in the state government budget. While the federal government injected funds from the ARRA program to try and covers shortfalls in the budgets school districts were still faced with situations in which they needed to raise funds in order to maintain the same level of quality educational experience for their children. Additionally the recession had a psychological effect on students and families when they were faced with unemployment or foreclosure, resulting in situations detrimental to overall student achievement. The multiple layers of these effects created difficult decision points for superintendents and school leaders. These decisions often presented themselves in the form of ethical dilemmas where one choice directly impacted another. In order to determine the most appropriate course of action for their school district, depending on each specific financial situation, superintendents were forced to make unprecedented decisions concerning their district.

Ethical Perspectives

Ethics

The term “ethics” comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means customs or usages, especially belonging to one group as distinguished from one another (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001). John Dewey (1902) describes ethics as the science that deals with

behavior that is considered to be right or wrong, good or bad. Superintendents make ethical decisions many times throughout their career. Foster (1986) voiced his thoughts on the seriousness and importance of ethics in educational administration when he said “each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas” (p. 33).

Code of Ethics

Superintendents have a professional responsibility to serve the needs of the students and faculty within a school. This professional responsibility demands moral obligations beyond those of an ordinary person. A professional code of ethics suggests a sense of moral vision for members of a profession (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). A code of ethics can provide a vision of how professionals should behave, increase ethical awareness and judgment in its members, provide guidance for ethical decision making, and provide support for moral courage. A code of ethics also sends a clear message to those outside the field regarding expectations from its members (Feeney, 2009).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has a statement of Ethics for Educational leaders that outlines what one should remember when making a decision for the school community. A main point for having this professional code of ethics for school leaders is because “an educational leader’s professional conduct must conform to an ethical code of behavior, and the code must set high standards for educational leaders” (“Code of Ethics,” 2007). By adopting and committing to this code of ethics, an educational leader acknowledges that she is a servant of the school community by acting in a way that provides equal educational opportunities for all students (“Code of Ethics,” 2007).

Ethical Dilemmas

Situations can be classified as ethical dilemmas when it involves a choice between values and responsibilities (Feeny & Freeman, 1999& Israel, 2004). Thomas Sergiovanni and Robert Starratt observed that educational leadership is productively conceived in terms of service to students, staff, and society (Wagner & Simpson 2009). Service to these individuals provides a variety of opportunities for ethical dilemmas to occur.

Research suggests that superintendents are faced with tough ethical dilemmas all the time throughout their career. Educational administrators will be called on to get things right when addressing ethical dilemmas. Without legal guidelines, district policy, or professional codes of ethics, the administrator is alone, and is faced with the decision on how to approach each ethical dilemma (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). Deciding what is right and what is wrong depends on the viewpoint of the superintendent making the decision. Two individuals may have varying view points on what the correct decision is for ethical dilemmas.

Schools are grounded deeply in board policies and rules guided by the law, which allow for effective daily functioning and are put in place to provide common law for all. However, research findings suggest that superintendents are often faced with ethical dilemmas that occur when the law and personal values do not coincide. The study titled “Superintendents ethical and legal decision making,” concluded when superintendents were faced with making a decision between following the law or their personal ethical beliefs, most would decide in favor of their ethical beliefs (Stanton, 2007). This study is consistent with Millerborg’s (1990) study in that they found the ethical decision pattern response to be chosen over the legal response.

Ethical Lenses

Superintendents can employ various ethical frameworks or lenses when faced with a difficult decision concerning their school district. There are different ethical perspectives which provide foundational claims that may help clarify a person's values. These ethical perspectives include utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique.

Utilitarianism often referred to as consequentialism, rests on the theory that morality or immorality of an action is determined by its consequences (Strike & Soltis, 2009). Kidder (1995) stated that the utilitarian perspective assesses consequences and the decision that produces the best results is the one chosen. The intent of any utilitarian decision would be to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people through actions that are focused on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. Using this frame for ethical decision-making allows a superintendent to consider a wide range of consequences and to the ability to choose the decision that will produce the best results for the most amount of people (Strike, 2007). One of the best arguments for utilitarianism is that it gives decision makers a frame to “logically decide which rule should prevail when one basic principle comes into conflict with another” (Beckner, 2004, p. 66).

Utilitarianism is supported by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stewart Mill (1806-1873). Utilitarian's such as Bentham and Mills recognize that “sometimes a few must suffer for the benefit of many, but such trade-offs are just in the nature of the world. They also acknowledge that many may suffer minor inconveniences if there is overwhelming benefits to a few” (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 31).

Deontology, often referred to as universalism or non-consequentialism, is generally associated with the philosopher Immanuel Kant's criteria for legitimating surface level moral rules as unbiased and equally applicable to all (Kant, 1998). Unlike utilitarianism, people will act in ways not because it favors the majority but because they have an unconditional obligation to follow the moral law. "Having a moral law is open to understanding by everyone able and willing to reason while keeping in mind that there is nothing more valuable in the moral world than the well-being of other autonomous agents" (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 30). Regardless of any consequences that may follow an action, people will do what is right according to moral codes.

Kant also believes that one's duty is the central concept in a morally correct action (Bordum, 2005). A duty is an action in which we are obligated to perform out of respect for the moral law (Kant, 1998). Kant named what he believed to be the governing principle of deontological actions as the categorical imperative (CI). The CI provides a moral rule that can be universally applicable to all, never favoring or disfavoring any individual or group (Bordum, 2005). It helps identify what is morally right and morally wrong. Within the deontological ethical lens, rules and policies developed with in schools should be universally applicable to all regardless of potential consequences that may occur in different situations.

In contrast to utilitarianism and deontology, which focus on justice, the ethic of care provides a contrasting voice in moral decision making. Carol Gilligan (1982), a feminist scholar, describes the ethic of care as a moral agent that must take into account the context of the moral dilemma and the specific relationships involved, grapple with the inherent ambiguities, and attempt to harm no one and care for all through the decision

taken. In Gilligan's research found in *In a Different Voice* (1982), she determined that many women and some men often found answers to their moral dilemmas through the ethic of care, concern, and connection.

Nel Noddings is another feminist scholar who supports the ethic of care, believing that students are at the center of the educational process and need to be nurtured and encouraged. For Noddings (1992), "caring is the very bedrock of all successful education and... contemporary schooling can be revitalized in its light" (p. 27). The ethic of care demands that school leaders look at each individual child and to listen to and accept all of their aspirations, interests, talents, and values even if they differ from your own (Katz, Nodding, & Strike 1999).

The ethic of care is not only important to scholars such as Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings but it is also essential to educational leaders who are often faced with the challenges of making moral decisions during their careers. Historically, educational leaders were taught about the importance of a hierarchal structure and the need to follow those at the top, and at the same time, to be in charge of subordinates (Guthrie, 1990). They were taught to develop "rules, policies, standard operating procedures, information systems or a variety of more informal techniques" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 48). The past ways of leading and making decisions are inadequate when one is considering the ethic of care because it requires educational leaders to consider multiple voices in the decision making process (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Shapiro and Stefkovich also suggest that if an educational leader is considering the ethic of care to solve moral dilemmas, he must focus heavily on the knowledge of cultures and of diversity with an emphasis of learning how to listen, observe, and respond to others.

The ethic of critique, supported by educational scholars such as Joan Shapiro, focuses on bringing to the attention of educators the inequities in society and in schools. The ethic of critique is based upon critical theory which focuses on the analysis of social class and inequities (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Critical theorists have found that over many decades, school recreate inequities similar to those found in society (Bourdieu, 1977, 2001; Lareau, 1987, 2003). The ethic of critique seeks to bring awareness to the voices of those who are silenced particularly those of the students (Giroux, 1988, 2003; Weis & Fine, 1993).

Educational leaders who approach ethical dilemmas using the ethic of critique are challenged to deal with the tough questions regarding social class, race, gender and other areas of difference (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Educational leaders “challenge the status quo by seeking an ethic that will deal with inconsistencies, formulate the hard questions, and debate and challenge the issues” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 13). Researchers suggest that the ethic of critique should be used as a vehicle to create change to help avoid the recreation of existing inequities in schools (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985).

Superintendents are faced with ethical decisions of varying levels of magnitude on a daily basis. At the core of all of these decisions is the superintendents “code of ethics” in which they base all of their reasoning and determinations. This code is different within every individual superintendent and is developed over the course of time based on personal and professional experiences. As the leader of a school system this code centers on being a servant to the school and local community and creating an environment that provides equal education opportunities for all students. Superintendents encounter challenges when faced with ethical dilemmas, situations that create tension between

responsibilities and values. In order to understand, process and act on these dilemmas individuals apply different ethical lenses to provide a framework for decision making. The common lenses of deontology, utilitarianism, care, and critique provide different view points on how a dilemma could be evaluated and approached, with each providing a different outcome. There is no right or wrong when utilizing these lenses, only opinions or levels of agreement in the end result. A superintendent has the ability to shape the culture and viewpoint of the students and local community as they make daily decisions of ethical dilemmas utilizing the different lenses.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to summarize the literature surrounding superintendents' leadership, the effects of the 2008 financial recession, and the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique. In order to provide the appropriate context to answer the following research questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?
 - a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?

2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique in what lenses did the superintendents' ground their decision making?
4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

Superintendents are faced with decisions on a daily basis that shape the overall success of their school district. These decisions must balance the right amount of knowledge or expertise on a financial topic as well as the internal ethical perspective in order to move forward in the most effective fashion. How superintendents choose to combine the functional with the ethical is at the core of how they make decisions. The importance of these decisions is magnified when superintendents are faced with difficult economic conditions that have changed the financial landscape of their school. This decision making process is unique to each individual and is the central focus of the research questions.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendents' leadership and decision-making.

This research answers the following questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?
 - a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?
2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique in what lenses did the superintendents ground their decision making?
4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

Research Strategy

A qualitative multi-case study design was used to collect data and answer the research questions. This research study explores the effects of the 2008 financial recession on superintendents' leadership and decision making in the areas of school curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs. These decisions are analyzed through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique. In order to provide a greater understanding on this issue and adequately address the research questions, this multi-case study focuses on two different superintendents in Illinois who lead unit school districts. Interviews, observations, and document review were used to collect data throughout this study.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world" and believe that qualitative researchers "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret , phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). The overall purposes of qualitative research is to provide an understanding of how people make sense of their world, describe the process of meaning making, and illustrate how people interpret what they experience (Merriam, 2009). Within this research design the study illustrates and makes meaning of how the 2008 financial recession affected the superintendents' leadership and decision making. It also analyzed these effects through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique.

Four key characteristics to understanding the nature of qualitative research include: focus on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and data analysis; the process is inductive and the product is

richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). Case study is a type of qualitative research that shares these four key characteristics with other forms of qualitative research techniques.

Creswell (2007) defines qualitative case study as “an approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p. 73). This multi-case study focused on multiple bounded systems, two Illinois unit school district superintendents, and used interviews, observations and document analysis as its sources of information to report the case description and themes to the readers.

Yin (2009) explains that “as a research method, the case study is used in many situations to contribute knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena” (p. 4). It allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events. Case study is characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Case study is more concrete and contextual. It is developed more by the reader’s interpretation and is based more on reference populations determined by the population in mind (Merriam, 2009). Stake (2007) explains how case studies illuminate our understanding of experience.

He calls the process “naturalistic generalization”: A case study provides vicarious instances and episodes that merge with existing icons of experience. Sometimes an existing generalization is reinforced; sometimes modified as a result of the case study, sometimes exploded into incomprehensibility. Qualitative case study is valued for its ability to capture complex action, perception, and interpretation. And from case study reports pour vignettes and narratives that feed into the naturalistic generalization of readers and writers. (p. 3)

This study was conducted to contribute knowledge and provide meaningful characteristics of the effects the 2008 financial recession had on superintendent’s

leadership and decision making. This case study is particularistic in nature because it focuses on the particular phenomenon. The reader is provided with rich, thick description from the interviews from the superintendents involved to allow them to develop a true understanding of their experiences when working to effectively run a school district with limited financial resources available (Merriam, 2009). This case study is reported in a way that illuminates the readers' understanding by allowing naturalistic generalizations to take place.

Sampling Plan

This research study explores the effects of the 2008 financial recession on superintendents' leadership and decision making in the areas of school curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs. Purposeful sampling was used to select the units of analysis within this study. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). In order to learn the most about the effects of the 2008 financial recession on the superintendents' leadership and decision making, the researcher will sought out a sample in which the most can be learned about this topic. A combination of convenience sampling and maximum variation sampling was utilized with in this study (Siedman, 1998).

When using purposive sampling in qualitative research, the researcher must first determine the selection criteria that are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied (Merriam, 2009). The researcher created a list of the attributes essential to the study and then proceeded to locate a unit matching the list (LeCompte & Pressle, 1993). The criteria used to select each school district to be studied consist of the following:

- K-12 unit school districts located in Illinois;
- Located within a tax cap district;
- Receiving between 22-37% of General State Aid Funding from the State of Illinois;
- Led by a school superintendent that has been employed with in the unit district of study since 2007.

This multi-case study focused on two unit school districts both fitting the criteria stated above. The participant population was limited to only unit school districts within Illinois, therefore convenience sampling was utilized. To locate possible unit districts in the state of Illinois and the percentage of general state aid funding received from the state, the researcher reviewed the Illinois School Report Cards from each school district. The Illinois School Report Cards can be located on the Illinois State Board of Education Website. Information about the length of time a superintendent has been employed in the school district was located on the school districts website or through the researcher calling or emailing the superintendent directly. Information about whether or not the school district resides in a tax capped county was located at the Illinois Department of Revenue website.

Once the two school districts were chosen that fit the selection criteria, the researcher contacted the superintendent to introduce and explain the research process and request permission to conduct research in that unit school district (see Appendix A). Once initial agreement was obtained the superintendents were provided with a letter of consent (see Appendix B) to participate in the research document to sign and return back to the researcher. The researcher then set up an interview time to gather information about the

effects of the 2008 financial recession had on superintendents' leadership and decision making in the areas of school curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs (see Appendix D). The researcher also requested the dates and times of all board of education meetings within the district and attended a meeting that related to the study. Finally the researcher requested access to previous board of education meeting minutes to investigate past financial decisions made within the school district (see Appendix A).

Interview Schedule Design

The purpose of the interview was to gather Illinois superintendents' responses regarding the effects of the 2008 financial recession on their school district. The interview with the select Illinois superintendents was semi-structured in nature and was approximately one hour in length. A semi- structured interview is:

Guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (Merriam, 2009, p. 90)

This environment provided the researcher more opportunity to respond to the new ideas that evolved as the interview was conducted. An advantage to conducting a semi-structured interview is the allowance of probing to occur. "Probes are questions or comments that follow up something already asked" (Merriam, 2009, p. 100). Probing allows the researcher to make adjustments as the interview progresses providing the opportunity to ask for more details or clarification if needed (Merriam, 2009).

A researcher can ask a variety of questions to help stimulate a response from an interviewee. Patton (2002) suggests six different types of questions including: experience and behavior questions, opinion and value questions, feeling questions, knowledge

questions, sensory questions, and background and demographic questions. The first portion of the interview collected background/demographic information on the Illinois superintendents being interviewed. Demographic questions contain questions that refer to the particular demographic of the person being interviewed such as age, income, education, and number of years on the job (Merriam, 2002). The researcher collected data regarding the superintendents' previous educational administration experience and length of time served as the superintendent.

The researcher then asked the superintendents about their leadership style to develop a better understanding of their thought process when they make decisions for their school district. Questions one and two in this section are considered opinion and value questions. Opinion and value questions ask about "a person's beliefs or opinions, what he or she thinks about something" (Merriam, 2009, p.96). Further questions in this area were asked to help the researcher develop an understanding of the leadership structure within the school district.

The next section of interview questions relate to the school districts' budget. These questions are considered knowledge questions. "Knowledge questions elicit a participant's actual factual knowledge about a situation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 96). The questions within this section provided the researcher with factual knowledge of the state of the school district's budget and how the 2008 financial recession has impacted it.

The section titled "2008 Financial Crisis" encompasses questions that ask about the effects of the 2008 financial crisis in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs within the school district. The questions are identified as experience and behavior questions. "Experience and behavior questions gets at the things a person

does or did, his or her behaviors, actions, and activities” (Merriam, 2009, p. 96). The questions within this section directly address the research question. Probing was used to clarify the respondent’s answers.

The last question asks the superintendents to reflect back on their previous decision making regarding the 2008 financial crisis and their school district. This question is considered a feeling question. “Feeling questions tap the affective dimension of human life” (Merriam, 2009, p. 96). Given all of the decisions that were made in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extracurricular programs the superintendents were asked to explain if they were able to go back and change a decision(s) what would that change would be. They were asked to explain why to help better identify their feelings towards the consequences of their previous decisions.

Data Collection

Interviews, observations, and document review was used to collect data within this research study. “Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple data, such as interviews, observations and documents, rather than rely on a single data source” (Creswell, 2007, p. 38). In order to examine the effects of the 2008 financial recession on superintendents’ leadership and decision making an interview was set up with each superintendent within the study. “The main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to find out what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). The research interviews were semi-structured in nature and were guided by a list of questions to be explored. The semi-structured interview format “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90).

The interview with the superintendents was recorded and transcribed at a later date. The researcher used the technique of member checking to validate the data collected from the interview. “Member checking is the single more important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 11). All responses remained confidential. Each respondent received a unique identification number and all data was analyzed and coded using the identification number. Individual names and school districts were not used in the final writing (see Appendix C).

Although interviews are a primary source of data in qualitative research the same holds true for observations as well. Observations are important to data collection with in research studies because an observer will notice things that have become routine to participants themselves, things that may lead to understanding the context (Merriam, 2009). Observations allow the researcher firsthand experience with the participants and allows the researcher to record information as it is revealed (Creswell, 2003). They also add to the triangulation of data, with interviews and document analysis, to help substantiate the findings (Merriam, 2009).

Within this qualitative research study, an observation of a school board of education meetings relating to financial concerns within each unit school district will be observed first hand by the researcher. This is an important element as the superintendents are in their natural element and provided the study with valuable firsthand knowledge. “Observation offers firsthand account of the situation under study,

and when combined with interviewing and document analysis allows for holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 136). The board meeting minutes from the observed board of education meeting was collected and used as data.

Documents are another source of data that will be used with in this qualitative research study. There are different types of documents including public and personal documents available for review within qualitative research. Public records are “the official, ongoing records of a society’s activities” (Merriam, 2009, p. 140). Guba and Lincoln (1981) explain, “the first and most important injunction to anyone looking for official records is to presume that if an event happened, some record of it exists” (p. 253). In this research study, past school board meeting agenda minutes were reviewed and analyzed to obtain valuable information on decisions made by the superintendents in the previous years as a result of the 2008 financial recession.

A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use a variety of different sources of evidence. A key advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the process of triangulation (Yin, 2009). Triangulation is the most well-known strategy to increase internal validity of a study (Merriam, 2009). “Triangulation is a means of checking the integrity of the inferences one draws. It can involve the use of multiple data sources and the central point of the procedure is to examine a conclusion from more than one vantage point” (Schwant, 2007, p. 298). Case study findings or conclusions are more likely to be more accurate if it is based on several different sources of information (Yin, 2009). The information in this qualitative case study obtained from

the interviews, observations, and document analysis was triangulated and then analyzed through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique.

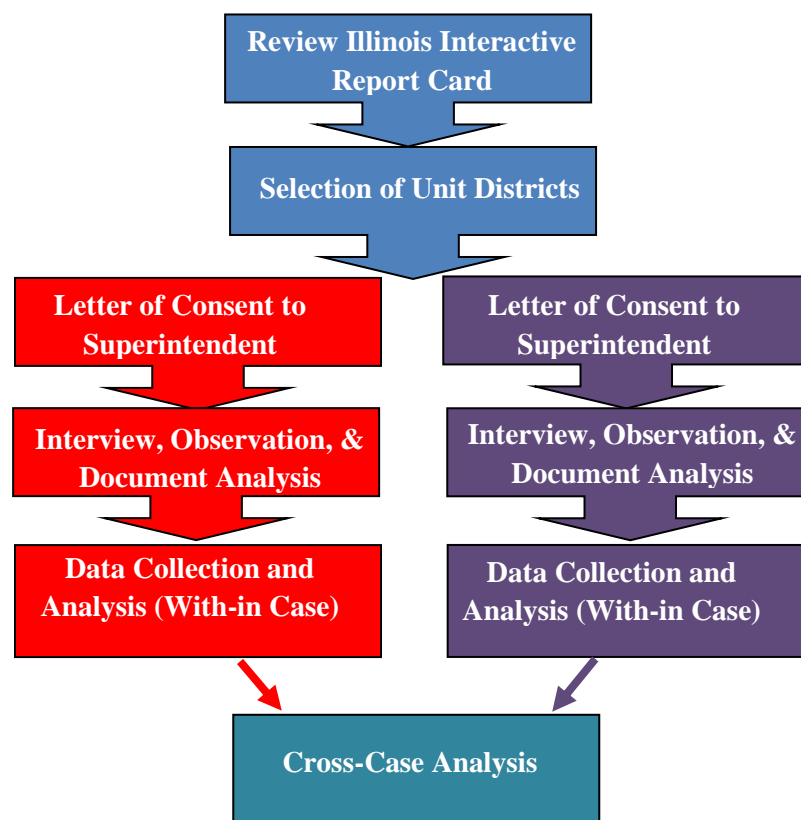


Figure 2. Data Collection

Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) explains that “the goal of data analysis is to make sense out of the data collected. This process involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read” (p. 176). In a multi-case study, there are two stages of analysis; the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009). Beginning with the within-case analysis the researcher first treated “each individual case as a comprehensive case in and of itself” (Merriam, 2009, p. 204). Each school district and superintendent was given a code for the data analysis

portion of the study. The school district codes were “A” for the first school district and “B” for the second school district. Superintendents were coded as School District A Superintendent and School District B Superintendent. All of the interview transcripts, field notes, reports, records, the researchers own documents and reflective memos were brought together and organized for each individual case. This collection of material is referred to as the case study database (Yin, 2008).

Miles and Huberman (1994) believe “it is crucial to have understood the dynamics of each particular case before proceeding to cross-case explanations” (p. 207). Therefore, the researcher spent the appropriate amount of time and effort reviewing data from each individual case ensuring a thorough understanding. During the within-case analysis stage the data from each individual site was coded into themes through pattern matching. “Pattern matching strengthens internal validity of qualitative research” (Yin, 2009, p. 136). These emergent themes were placed into categories relating to the research questions and ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique. The triangulation of patterns from each case study was done through data source triangulation. Once the data from each individual site was coded and triangulated, the emergent themes from each individual site were used in the second phase of data analysis, the cross-case analysis.

The cross-case analysis allows the data collected from the two case studies to be combined. It will lead to categories, themes, and typologies that conceptualize the data from each case. In a cross-case analysis, the researcher attempts to build a general explanation that fits the individual cases (Yin, 2008). The data collected from the cross-

case analysis was analyzed through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique.

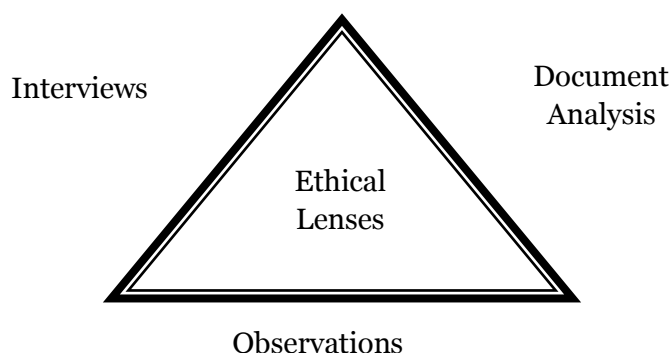


Figure 3. Data Analysis

Bias Limitation

“Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner” (Merriam 2009, p. 209). Safeguards have been integrated to ensure the validity and reliability of this research project. First, the researcher provided a letter of consent (see Appendix B) to the superintendents participating in the study so they were aware of the methodology used during this research study and it provided their consensus for the interview to be recorded. Confidentiality was assured when the superintendents signed the Consent to Participate in Research document (see Appendix B). Holding confidentiality has two associated challenges; protecting the participant’s privacy and holding in confidence what they share with you (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The researcher’s task during the interview was primarily to be that of an observer or interpreter. During the interview the researcher allowed the participants to contribute the majority of the data collected. The researcher

was in communication with the superintendents to review and double check findings from the research conducted and helped identify the presence of personal bias and misunderstandings. “The strategy of member checking is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 11). Additionally the researcher collected data in the form of recordings, notes, and transcripts to help validate findings.

The researcher is currently a building level administrator with six years of experience. To help prevent the researchers personal bias from coming out during the data collection process, the researcher kept a reflective journal containing field notes, questions, new information, contradictions, and personal reflections as they arose during the study. Richards (2005) writes that “good qualitative research gets much of its claim to validity from the researcher’s ability to show convincingly how they got there, and how they built confidence that this was the best account possible” (p. 143). This reflective journal was shared with the dissertation director on a regular basis.

Summary of Methodology

In summary, a qualitative multi-case study was used to gain an understanding of how the 2008 financial recession affected superintendents’ leadership and decision-making. Specifically this study looked at what reductions, if any, were made in school districts by superintendents in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs and the reason behind their decision making. This dissertation analyzed these decisions through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique.

This qualitative research project studied two K-12 unit school districts located in tax capped district in the state of Illinois, who receive between 22-37% of general state aid funding from the state of Illinois and are led by a school superintendent that has been employed with in the unit district of study since 2007. Once two unit school districts were selected and consent to participate was received, the researcher collected data in the following ways; a one hour interview with each school superintendent, an observation of board of education meeting with topics relating to school finance and budget, and by analyzing previous board of education meeting minutes.

Once data was collected, the two stage data analysis process began. The researcher began with a within-case analysis on each school district. During the within-case analysis stage the data from each individual site was coded into themes through pattern matching and was placed into categories relating to the research questions and ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique. The triangulation of patterns from each case study was done through data source triangulation. The emergent themes from each individual site were then used in the cross-case stage of analysis. The cross-case analysis led to categories, themes, and typologies that conceptualized the data from each case. The data collected from the cross-case analysis was analyzed through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique. All of this information was integrated to answer the overarching research questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?

- a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?
2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique, in what lenses did the superintendents ground their decision making?
4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendents' leadership and decision- making. Specifically this study looked at what reductions, if any, were made in school districts by superintendents in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs and the reason behind their decision making. These decisions were analyzed through the conceptual framework of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique. This qualitative case study research design included semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D), observations, and document analysis to gain insight on the following research questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?
 - a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?

2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique, in what lenses did the superintendents ground their decision making?
4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

The following qualitative research protocol was used to conduct this research:



Figure 4. Qualitative Research Protocol

Data Collection Process for District “A”

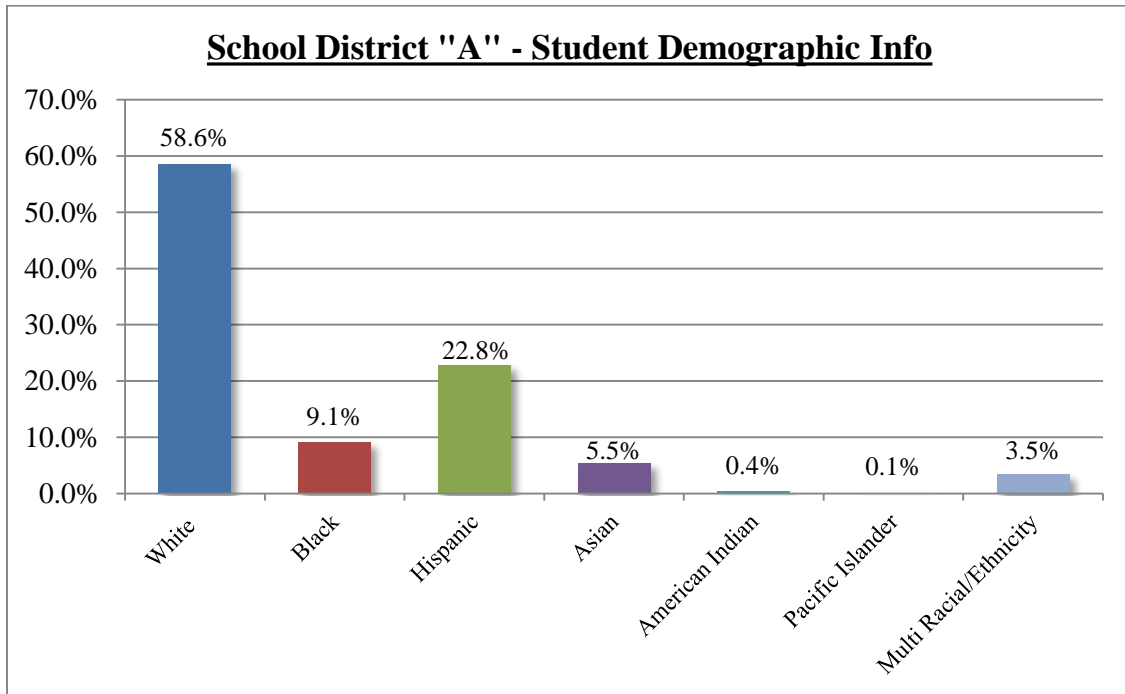
During the research process the researcher communicated with Superintendent “A” on multiple occasions for the purpose of member checking. On March 10, 2014 the researcher met with the superintendent for the initial interview. Following the interview, on July 2, 2014, the researcher sent a copy of the transcription from the interview to the superintendent via email for his review. The superintendent responded with his approval on July 17, 2014. On July 19, 2014 the researcher reached out to the superintendent with a variety of clarifying questions and the superintendent responded in detail via email on July 21, 2014. On August 11, 2014 the researcher contacted Superintendent “A” for suggestions on how to obtain the meeting minutes from “special” board of education meetings that were not posted online for the public. The superintendent provided the

researcher with a contact in the school district who provided her with this information.

On August 22, 2014 the researcher met with Superintendent “A” for 15 minutes to review her findings and provide one last opportunity for clarification on the interpretation of decision making that had happened with in School District “A” during the time of the financial recession.

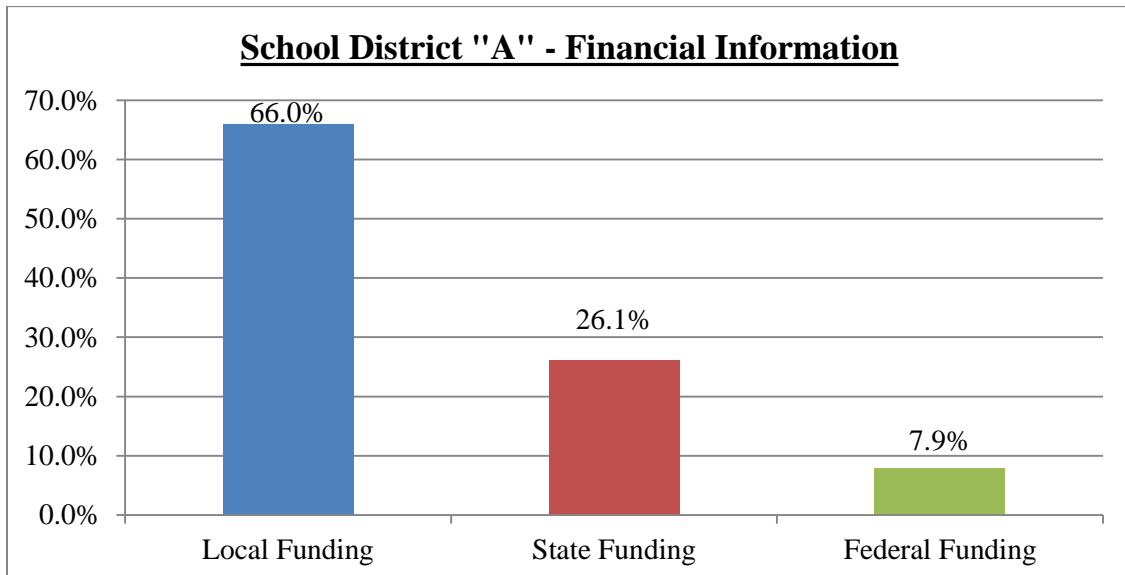
School District “A”

School District “A” is located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. School District “A” has a growing community with affordable, new housing developments and a wide array of populated shopping centers. There are 30 schools operating district-wide serving more than 28,000 students, Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. The students with in the district come from various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. In 2012-13, 76 different languages were spoken or represented in this district. The information below in Figure 5 displays the student demographic breakdown for School District “A” during the 2013-2014 school year. The average teaching experience in the 2012-2013 school year for School District “A” was 10.1 years. The current instructional expenditure per pupil is \$5,544. The school district relies heavily on local and state funding (see Figure 6 below for specific district financial information).



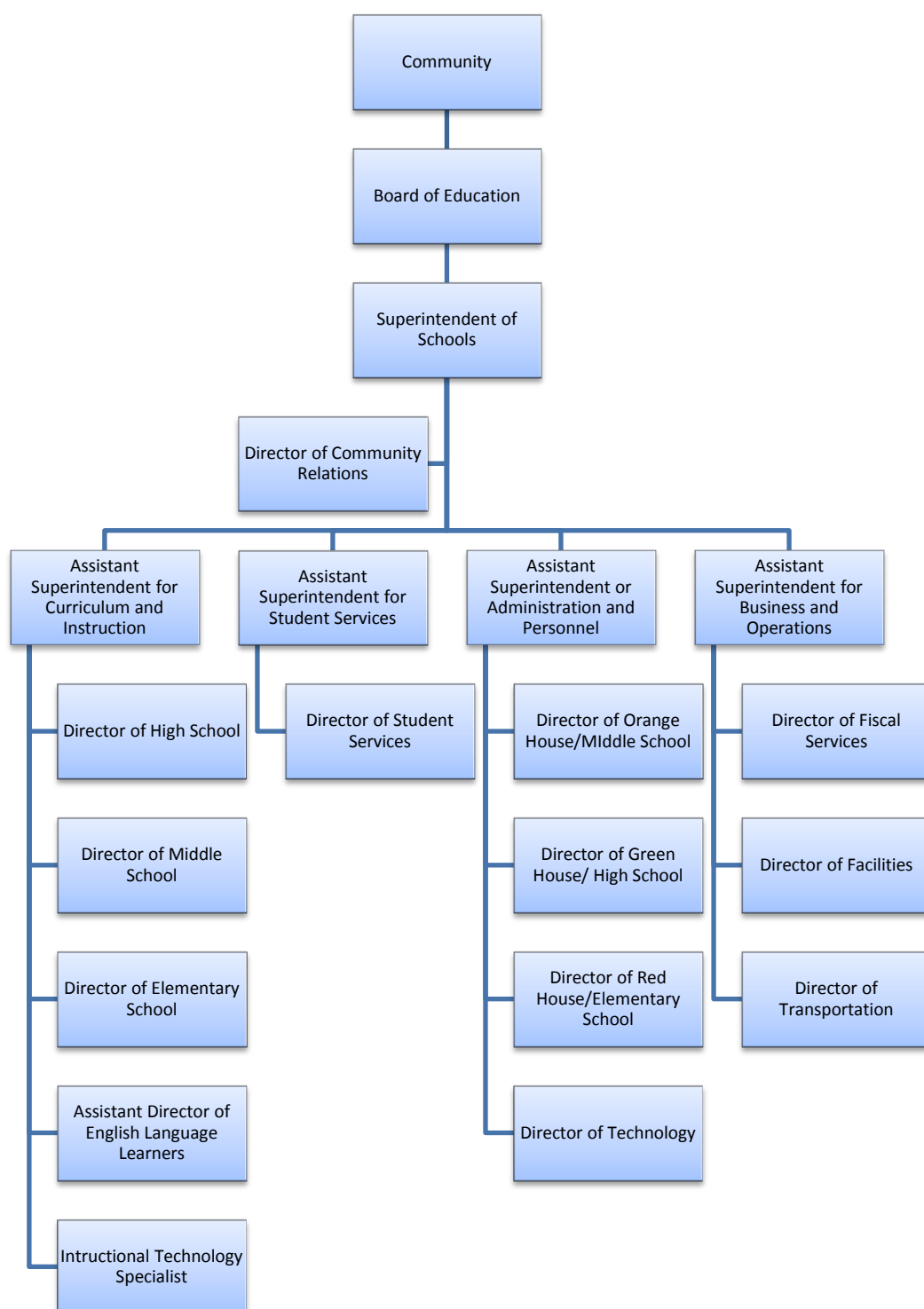
Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Figure 5. School District “A” – Student Demographic Information



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Figure 6. School District “A” – Financial Information



Source: School District "A" Website

Figure 7. School District "A" Organizational Chart

Semi-Structured Interviews

This section presents qualitative data that was obtained from the interview with Superintendent “A.” After obtaining consent from the respective superintendent, this researcher set up a time and date for a face to face, semi-structured interview. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for additional clarification questions to be asked in addition to the original interview protocol. The interview with Superintendent “A” was conducted on March 10, 2014, was held on the grounds of School District “A’s” Administrative Center and lasted approximately one hour and 45 minutes in length. Completed transcripts were returned to Superintendent “A” for any corrections, clarifications or changes as a means to member check (Merriam, 2009).

As a part of the interview protocol, five demographic questions were asked to gain an understanding of the superintendent’s background and experience in the field of education and how the knowledge of school finance was acquired. The questions and the responses to the questions are depicted below in chart form along with a brief explanation.

Table 2

Superintendent “A” Demographics

Questions 1-5	Superintendent A
How long have you been a superintendent in this district?	12 years
How long have you worked in educational administration prior to obtaining a position as the superintendent?	29 years
Did you work in this district prior to becoming the superintendent?	Yes- previous positions included: Teacher, Coach, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, and Principal
How many years of your administrative career have taken place in an Illinois School District?	33 years
How did you acquire your knowledge in school finance?	Administrative experience

As part of the semi-structured interview protocol, the questions were constructed to provide an understanding of how the 2008 financial recession affected the leadership and decision-making of Superintendent “A.” The semi-structured format “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009). During the interview with Superintendent “A”, the researcher asked questions that were in addition to the original interview protocol to gain a deeper and richer understanding of the situation at hand. The data gathered from the semi-structured interview with Superintendent “A” is listed below.

Superintendent “A” Semi-Structured Interview

General leadership. As the instructional leader of the district what is currently your top priority? I would have to say currently it is the transition. It is unusual, but at this stage of the game the board hired my successor and he has been here since July 1 serving in the capacity as an associate superintendent. However, the transition plan that I wrote and the board approved slowly transferred authority and responsibility to him. And while I am still acting as a superintendent I have far less responsibilities than I typically do and it is appropriate as so much of what we do second semester, especially now, relates to next year. So for me, I would say it is the transition.

If you were to provide advice to this new superintendent, what should his top priority be going into this job? The board that hired me 12 years ago, there isn't any members of that board still with me. Boards evolve and some of the current board members are there in part because of their oppositions to decisions I made before they were on the board. And unlike my first eight years or so as superintendent I had a very strong collaborative relationship with the board. I don't now. And I would and have advised the associate superintendent that he is their choice and that's important. They chose him and he needs to maintain that relationship. The hard part is that the board is dysfunctional. The board is not at all focused on governance. It is focused on micromanagement, on administration, and candidly on themselves. The incoming superintendent is going to have to be very skilled and walk in a line between maintaining a strong relationship with the board while at the same time keeping his administrators involved, committed, and loyal because it's not a secret.

What are the metrics of success that you use to measure whether or not a particular decision is successful? I would say it varies from initiative to initiative and I will share some of what the metrics were that we relied on with regard to the depths of reduction. Typically, when we identify an initiative or the community identifies an initiative it's targeted on the five-year strategic plan, the individual assigned to be the primary point person will sit with me, will sit with assistant superintendents, and may even sit with the board of education.

And what I refer to as planning backwards is that if we want an eight-period day at the high school, or full day kindergarten, or dual language, and all three of those are initiatives identified in the five-year plan, we ask the questions; what does that look like, when it is done, what do we have to do in order to actualize that vision? We also talk about the finances associated with it, the curriculum renovations that would have to go with it, and communications with the community.

So we will analyze those initiatives and plan backwards. I am a relatively controlling person, so when I embark upon something like that, I like to have discussions with the board with regard to parameters. I want to know what are their expectations for the depths of reduction, what are their values, what are the parameters, the fences that they are going to put around me so I know where they want me to be? For example, if they do not want me to touch extracurricular, tell me that so that I'm not bringing recommendations for extracurricular. What I came to learn is that I would have better navigated the political landscape. Now, I say that without knowing how, but the board was under such pressures related to the reduction that privately they might say one thing

and publicly, they wouldn't lie, but they would not be as outspoken and advocate as they would be if it was just me with them.

Describe your work with your administrative team. What are the most common topics on your agendas and in your meetings? Meeting structures and meeting processes was something that was drilled into me by my dissertation chair. Structure and processes, those are two terms that I find myself using a lot or at least thinking about when it comes to the organization. I have a number of administrative structures, meeting structures. One is for lack of a better word "total executive cabinet." Now the executive cabinet is myself and the four assistant superintendents. We meet weekly on Thursday mornings and Tuesday mornings after board meetings. Board of education meetings were on Monday so we will meet first thing in the morning on Tuesday after our board meeting to make sure that whatever happened, we have it covered.

The second structure is PreK-12. PreK-12 is every principal in the district which is 30; 17 elementary, 7 middle, 5 high schools and an early learning center and also any central office administrators that have their offices here. So it's the assistant superintendents and their staff. At a minimum we meet once a month. More often than not the agenda requires us to meet twice a month. In order to get on the agenda it has to be a topic that is applicable to all 30 principals. That is where we talk about initiatives related to the district strategic plan or talk about processes for school improvement. For school improvement obviously the information contained is different, but they each use the same template.

The third meeting structure is our leveled meetings which typically follows PreK-12 meetings. If we met at 8:30 in the morning for PreK-12 meetings, that agenda would be done by 10 o'clock, and the administrators would then move into leveled meetings where the high school principals will meet together, the elementary principals will meet together, and the middle school principals will find an area to meet together. An assigned central office administrator is present in each of the meetings.

And the fourth structure is something I introduced probably ten years ago and that is a house structure. Now the house structure, in my mind, was to try to create some stability in an incredibly unstable place. We were registering and enrolling 2,400 new kids a year and opening anywhere from one to three new schools every year. It was growing, it was emotional, it was a lot of things that probably most of which were very good, but change at that rapid of pace was also intimidating, because we were hiring hundreds of teachers a year. I was concerned about the induction program, their readiness to step-in. We had caps on hiring and we put a ceiling on five years. So we were getting, for the most part, newbies; young, energetic, and enthusiastic teachers. We hired hundreds of those folks without necessarily a counter balance with mentoring. So the house concept was intended to find the intimacy and the smallness of the district. I borrowed it from the middle school concept; a school within a school. I said, okay, we have 30 campuses, but if I live in a certain corridor, I will go to one of these three elementary schools, maybe four elementary schools depending upon the area, because the neighboring city was the municipality that was exploding during that time. Our district

grew, but we would joke with each other that our neighboring city is going to annex probably to Iowa and keep building schools.

Well I looked at the southern and southwestern quadrant of the district and I said well if they go to one of these four elementary, they are going to matriculate into one of these two middle schools. In other words, if they go to one of these two middle schools, they are going to go to this high school. Those seven schools would be the world for those kids and for those families. And the house concept was intended to say if we're building a school up north that could affect you. If we're building a school over on the east side of the district, it's probably not going to affect you.

The house structure provided some stability and allowed for seven principals to share the same kids. So they meet on a regular basis and they look at the test scores of those common kids. They look at the curriculum initiatives from the elementary to middle to high school. They are building transitional programs, because those kids can matriculate from fifth grade to sixth grade, they go to one of these two middle schools. The fifth grade teachers and sixth grade teachers are building a bridge as is the elementary and middle school principals. Each of our buildings has a responsibility to report on their school improvement plans to the Board of Education each year, and those seven principals report together. In other words it's the house that reports and they talk about the demographics. And it is interesting to see which house is the most diverse, which house has a stronger free and reduced lunch, which schools are Title I, and which schools are the wealthiest? It is interesting to see the level of achievements even though

it is the same curriculum. So after the PreK-12 meetings once, twice a month, we will adjourn and either go into a house meeting or a leveled meeting.

At the leveled meetings the high school principals meet and discuss high school concerns, because that is what they are dealing with. This could be the eight-period day, because that only affects them. The 17 elementary school principals do not need to be a part of an in-depth discussion on that. Same thing with full day kindergarten, high school principals do not need to be a part of that. So those are the structures, and even if we do not have PreK-12 meeting, it is relatively common that we have a leveled meeting or a house meeting every week.

Describe your relationship with your Business Manager? How does the Business Manager affect or influence your decision making? To a large extent the business person at this point is the gatekeeper especially in light of the \$40 million we had to cut and the hundreds of jobs that people lost. It causes me to really prioritize the initiatives or to have discussions with the board about prioritizing initiatives. It's nice that the eight-period day, full day kindergarten and dual languages are all on the strategic plan, but I also underscore for the community that we are conducting feasibility studies. It does not mean that we are going to do each of those.

Now I would be hard pressed to say well "that's not worth it." Well they are all worth it, and we want all of them, but we can't afford all of them. And with full day kindergarten we are still dealing with a number of schools that do not have the space to accommodate that.

So when it relates to the five-year strategic plan, I rely heavily on the business manager, because if we are not in the financial position to support it then the conversation quickly turns to what are we willing to give up, because our priorities are different in 2014 than maybe they were in 2008. We do not have the money for example to have an eight-period day at the high school, but what do we have now that we are willing to give up or reallocate money for? Because goodness knows that the state is not giving us more money. So a lot of the discussion now is the reallocation of funds. Nothing gets much traction unless the administration has a plan to reallocate and make the hard decisions with the board or education.

Describe your relationship with your current board of education. In your work with the board of education do you use subcommittees or a committee of the whole structure? Explain why you chose one over the other. We have subcommittees, and currently we have three. Ways and Means/ Site Management, is one committee that traditionally was two different separate committees. It was Ways and Means and Site. That was back in the construction days. At this point we are not building so they have combined those two committees into one and that committee meets every month.

The second committee is Applied Learning and Technology which is as the title implies curriculum initiatives and school improvement. We threw in technology and I could not tell you why, but that is where it happens to be, and that meets every other month. And the last committee is PPA, which is Policy, Personnel, and Administration and when Applied Learning isn't meeting PPA is meeting, they just go alternate months.

I didn't choose them, and this is where the candidness comes in. The first part of the answer is it has always been that way. When I was here 30 years ago as a teacher, I of course did not know much at all about it, I knew there were these committees. When I was superintendent there were committees. Committees were intended to deal with the detail. They are going to hear and learn far more about a curriculum initiative than all seven board members are, but those three board members were the liaison to curriculum or the liaison to finance or the liaison to policy, etc. In 2008, approximately, I went to the board president and then to the full board and recommended disbanding the committees. The board doesn't trust each other. They don't trust a lot of things, but they don't trust each other. And the dynamic that was happening was Ways and Means/Site would bring the recommendation to the full board. Well the board members who do not sit on that committee, and I am not talking about all of them, one or two, would jam it up because they didn't hear all the detail. The purpose of the committee is that you do not have to absorb everything. I do not think this board wanted to, they just wanted to control it. I recommended disbanding the committees and going with the committee of the whole structure where the seven board members would all sit and listen in. I also planned to bring in the assistant superintendents for student services and curriculum and they would have the Applied Learning agenda with them. This way all board members can all hear and ask questions. The recommendation was denied based on tradition because that is what they used to. There was an acknowledgement that it was not working, but for however many years it has worked. The seven members that are sitting now it does not work for, but we would rather, let's put it in my words, remain dysfunctional than break

with tradition and I have to defend that. So we remained dysfunctional. When things go to the board now, even things that are not controversial, they can become controversial, because somebody wants the meat on the bone. It is not enough that you are my colleague and we are all in this together and if you tell me we are good to go, I am good to go. What propelled me to make the recommendation is when one board member asked me about an initiative and I said, yes that was approved by Ways and Means and then the board two months ago. And she said in response, oh yeah, I didn't think I had anything to do with that. Well, she did, but she doesn't see and still doesn't see that there is any ownership in it and there should have been.

Budget questions. Does your school district have a tax cap? Yes.

Please explain what sources of revenue your school district relies on to operate on a yearly basis. Right now, about 25% of our budget is General State Aid and we are becoming more and more dependent on General State Aid, because the district has a very low Equalized Assessed Valuations (EAV). We do not have a strong tax base with industrial and business. So for the most part it is on the backs of the property owners and the residents. 25% General State Aid, I am just talking now about the operating funds, about 38% in property tax, 8% state categorical, 4% in federal grants and about 5% in local sources.

How does General State Aid play a role in your school district's budget?

How much does your school district depend on this assistance from the state? How has it affected your budget planning process since the financial recession in 2008?

Whatever the state tells us, they are going to prorate, we built a budget that is between

1% to 1.5% less. So if they tell us it's going to be prorated at 89% then we will come in at 88% or 87.5% and hope for the best. And no one is quite sure what is going to happen next year. Next year we are hearing, it could go to 85% even 82% and the new superintendent is really constructing that budget with the business manager this year. So I am not sure what number he is using, but I do know if it's 85%, he is going to go 1% to 1.5% less. He is going to maintain that practice, if that ends up to be 82% then there is only so much school districts can do, because a district of our size going from 89% to 85% is millions of dollars, less if it goes to 82%.

2008 financial recession. When you were informed of the decrease in funding from the state what process did you take to overcome this challenge? We have a good relationship with our state representative and his office is here in our downtown and I think highly of this state representative, I believe he is a good man in an incredibly dysfunctional situation. So he will have conversations with us or he will through his staff, initiate conversations with us. That has expanded with other state representatives as well who have taken the time to attend some of our community coffees which on a side note that is great, because when an elected official walks into one of my coffees, it's not my coffee anymore. People want to talk to them, so I am going to have an easy day. We find out usually when everybody else does that the state has finalized their budget and here is what they are doing.

I used to believe that I could go on the governor's annual state of the state address, that was when I was naive and I was talking to our state representative and he said, "yeah that really doesn't mean anything down here." And I don't know if that was a

commentary on Governor Quinn but it has proven true that what might be said or pledged by the governor, it has not gone through.

How did you communicate with the various stakeholders of your school district? Well internally it is through PreK-12 meetings and my administrators, just a matter of processes, they have the responsibility to go back and communicate to their staff. We are not working on any secret covert operations here unless I tell you this is for your ears only for now, you need to go back and talk to your staff. I met with the faculty on institute day and faculty would rotate from one activity to another and I was one of those activities. So at one point in time the staff was sitting in the auditorium at one of the high schools hearing it. The staff meeting was intended to educate them on the state of finance that this is what the district relies upon in order to fund our programs. So when the state reduces the amount they are going to pay and you hear that they are going to pay at the certain percent, we have said that equals this much money. The staff was remarkable in the context of appreciating the presentation.

Every principal was required to go back and facilitate a meeting with their staff similar in nature to what I did with them regarding the depths of reduction. So not only did I encourage them and invite them to give us suggestions, but through their principal they had faculty meetings intended to identify.

Our community relations department did a nice job in not only getting press releases out, but also structuring statements for the board president at board meetings. And we would write letters. In fact, I wrote a letter to Governor Quinn and I had copied it to our state representative and some others. And I believe with the help of our state

representative, I got a meeting with the governor and three or four other districts attended. I was given the opportunity to kind of facilitate the meeting. And it's one of those times where maybe it did some good but I don't know Governor Quinn anywhere near the level I know our state representative, but I believe politicians, whom I think try to do it all, try to keep school people happy. It was a nice discussion and an opportunity to see how the Evanston's of the world and rural districts are dealing with the same kind of problem. But it was a two-hour meeting and God Bless him for the time he gave but its two hours of my life I will never get back.

What factors or considerations did you bring into your decision making regarding reductions in the area of teaching and learning, personnel, and extracurricular? What final reductions were made in these areas? In working with the board, their charge and their direction was to eliminate the deficit in its entirety. We are not going to whittle away and get it done. Part of the deficit reduction was actually increasing fees to offset, but the board did not want to pass more expense onto the parent who was already paying fees and already paying property taxes.

The other thing that we did is we created some comparables. I asked one of our departments to look at "the big five," because their unit district is somewhat similar to us. I asked them to talk about the ratio of middle school deans. You can see that there is only one other district that has middle school deans. When looking at the numbers of deans at the high school level, we were low, as opposed to the Naperville's. So, that is an area for reduction. We found that we have the lowest non-certified media teacher assistant's, nine month secretaries, bookkeepers, reading specialists. This did not prove as valuable as we

had hoped for one simple reason and that is there is such differences between the building budget and what the district provides. That may be 97.04, but the principals, have to budget for replacement furniture that the district is not going to pay for. If the growth in your attendance area is such that you need to add another fourth grade, the district is going to pay for all the furniture in that classroom, but if it just replacement because it gets worn out, you have to pay for that. In other districts they might buy that, so you never quite knew. This was our per pupil expenditure, so if your projected enrollment if your elementary has 1,000 kids; 1,000 times 97.04, that was your budget.

I had 28 out of 30 principals recommend to reduce our building budgets by 10%. So the origin started with the elementary principals, but eventually when they heard it through the process, we received endorsements from all of them. It did not involve certified and non-certified staff or non-union people, it involved a reduction of \$388,000. Is it a duty to bargain? By doing that if we changed the working condition of our teachers, do we need to meet with them or do we have the authority to do this? Rational building budgets have already been cut by 20%, so we continue at this percentage.

We didn't cut 40 million in one sweep. We did it over a few years. So we had already cut budgets by 20% and God bless them, take another 10%; cutting your budgets by a third. Well I did not recommend it. We posted on our website and you could go on as a community member and make suggestions for reducing. Where do you see the fat for lack of a better word? Anytime you are going to make the recommendation to make a cut, you have to tell me how we are going counteract that, which was referred to as a counter balance strategy. So have a plan.

Have a plan because when you get into things like eliminating fifth grade band, it gets political. I recommended eliminating fifth grade band. You can see it came from the elementary principals, so the middle school and high school principals stayed away from it. It saved us \$436,000. The placement on the ranking scale was in the middle which was a priority thing that we did. The rationale was that it would not negatively impact the middle school program. If we did fifth grade band over the lunch period, so during the 50 minutes, you have 25 minutes to eat lunch, the other 25 when the kids go off for playground you go to band. We did not feel as though it was going to impact the middle school. The counterbalance strategy was that we start band at sixth instead of fifth. We did this and I am paying for that to this day.

Did the board approve your recommendations? Over the course of the three-year period some were, some were not. It is just in the sense of the dysfunction and also the political climate. I hope this story illustrates it because it will be in my memory forever. We had a special meeting with the board of education on a Thursday night, close session for purposes of personnel, collective bargaining, and to identify not only what I was recommending but for the board to give some direction in terms of we are on board with and what we are not. Certainly it was not the first time they saw this.

We broke at 10:30pm Thursday night. Seven members of the board of education were unanimous and all we know what we are going to be doing Monday night. 4pm on Monday afternoon the board president called and said the board has flipped, and we were going into a meeting in three hours.

We have a board meeting in three hours and we were going to have a big audience, because one of the other processes that we put in place was we held community forums with the board. Although I did not enjoy getting yelled at, I wouldn't do it differently because it needed to be done and I would rather give people the chance to do that and feel they were heard. Each of those three years we held three to four community forums approximately four hours in length, in which they would have gone on all night if allowed to. There, people would repeat themselves, which is only human nature, that I can explain it better than they can. So, yes, let's say four community forums, a board meeting on Thursday night and three hours before the next meeting the board flipped. We are going to have hundreds of people at this board meeting and we do not have a plan.

When they flipped, is there something specific that sticks out in your mind in regards to something you were agreed upon and then they were absolutely against it? Pretty much everything does. 6:30 pm the board convenes, goes into executive session, and we have nothing. It was like... "we don't want to do band," okay... \$436,000, you're good with everything else, granted we got to find it someplace else to fill this \$0.5 million void? No, they did not like that, he didn't like that, etc. My head was spinning as were other administrators, because this was months of preparation, months of discussion dialogue and here we were.

So what was the end result of that board meeting? And the end result was when we got to that part of the agenda it became the board president going item-by-item

and individual board members were voting not on a package that reduced \$10 million.

Fifth grade band, call the roll...

Was it a long meeting? Oh! It was horrific and it was not only painstaking, but it sent such a poor message to the community because we appeared as though we were unorganized, except we weren't because on Thursday night we were tightened at seven. I cannot explain till this day. We have had four of these forums discussing the pros, con's, yes', no's, and what the administrative recommendation is and I did not know as superintendent, I had no idea if we were going to get four on that, or if we were going to get four on this.

I mean in part I know it was political, and I empathize with that, because if I am getting paid as a superintendent and it is hard for me to be there, these folks are volunteers and not only are they hearing at the forums, but they are getting phone calls, they are having people who are their friends because we are looking at cutting a program their child is invested in, I get that. In our case it was also that the board knew what their job was and I did not care. Your job is to govern. These are hard decisions but are coming not only from me as a superintendent; they are coming from 30 building administrators.

Now I'm not saying that every principal is happy and there were things that I recommended that I knew a high school principal would not want to lose a dean and I knew that, but I met with them before. I said I am recommending you lose a dean and I am doing it because of these comparables and we can agree to disagree, but it is my job to make a recommendation.

When you were making those recommendations, what was your bottom line?

When you made the decision to recommend... why did you make that decision even though it might not have been completely approved by the board? That was just a fundamental decision that I made and I would not do it differently. I ran into or came to learn of some unintended consequences associated with it. For example, when I look back, high school was holding back. What I mean by that is when you see the process that I structured in which I asked for their input and I would put people in leveled meetings, elementary principals would cut off their right arm and offer it and high school principals were very limited. Again, I'm generalizing, but I came to understand even in the process that some of the high school principals were playing poker with me.

When I realized this, the administrators not only met as a level, but they had to meet with their house, and there they needed to be able to explain why they are recommending the cuts they are and what the counterbalance strategy is. I also gave them each level when I realized that maybe one is not being real forthcoming. Elementary now go outside of the elementary, I want your recommendations for central office cuts, I want your recommendation for middle school, I want your recommendation for high school, etc.

Now you get to look kind of from the outside in and say I'm an elementary principal with 1,000 kids and I have an assistant principal. But you're telling me the high school and we had one principal, three assistants, four or five deans and the ratio for deans is under 400.... how? Well, those got to be hard conversations not so much with me but between colleagues, because unlike what I believe was their dynamic with the

teachers, with this there is a kind of a reluctance. The administrators felt more comfortable engaging in those. The first was their level, that's it, that is your focus. You, your job, just what you know works, what doesn't work, etc.

And the other piece, I'm sorry it's rear view mirror stuff, but I came to learn, which I didn't catch it at the beginning, that the board had a predisposition toward the high school. I don't know why, I didn't recognize it earlier but it was because they had older children. For example, we eliminated Reading Recovery, which is a marvelous program. It is highly effective, it is very costly and it requires a Reading Recovery teacher to meet individually with a kid for let's say four to six weeks. Over the course of that a student will grow two grade levels in reading and they demonstrate it. We had the data that said kids who are in Reading Recovery in first grade, by the time they get to fourth grade; they are at or above their grade level in reading. It had tremendous effectiveness, but it was very pricy.

At the same time we have a Restorative Justice program in our high school. This program is an alternative to suspension. If a child did something that typically would warrant a suspension for three to five days, if it is your first time, in lieu of suspension, you can enroll in a three day restorative justice program which basically brings you to school. You do not go to your classes; you stay in a room, staffed by a social worker and an aide. These students can get all their work done there and also participate in a curricular instructional component where the social worker has them reflect on their behavior. Secondly, when a mistake is made, the student must apologize. If something was said to a teacher that should not have said, the student should apologize. If you

damage something you have to pay for that, etc. The board cut the Reading Recovery program with out of blink of the eye but the Restorative Justice program, no way.

I admit the program is nowhere near as expensive as Reading Recovery, but both one-on-one, one teacher, one student. I go out, you get another one, but it is an intense one-on-one. The restorative justice program could be one-on-one if it's a slow discipline day, but maybe you have three kids. This is all the social worker does. If she does not have any kids that day, as superintendent I am telling you, I do not know what she does and the principals really could not tell me either.

Reflection question. Reflecting back, would you make any changes or adjustments to your final decisions regarding reductions? If so what would you have changed and please explain why? Candidly I do not know. I say that because when I recognize the dynamic of teachers being reluctant to bring forth an example at a faculty meeting, every building here has a suggestion box where you can sign it or you do not have to sign it. If you feel that this is a reduction but do not want to be the person identified as submitting it, get it to your principal anonymously.

If I had to do it again I would not change the collaborative nature of it and whether it is the community input or administrative or teaching or whatever, I would not change that. Maybe what I would bring would be less, maybe naiveté where the board's predisposition to one level over another. The pressures on board members and the influence those pressures have, I think maybe I would just go in a little more seasoned, real quick.

District “A” Observation

The researcher attended a board of education meeting on Monday, March 17, 2014. All regular board of education meetings are held in the district’s Administrative Center. Closed session begins at 6:30 pm and public session begins at 7:30 pm. The opportunity to sign up for public comment was located just outside of the board room on a table to the right prior to walking into the room. The researcher arrived to the board of education meeting at 7 pm and was one of few people in attendance for the meeting. The district Director of Community Relations introduced himself and welcomed the researcher to the meeting. He voluntarily added these words regarding the current superintendent when the researcher explained the reason for her attendance; “the district would not be where we are today without his leadership and a school does not grow like this without a great leader who takes risks.”

Around 6:45 pm there was standing room only filled with students, parents, community members and media. The superintendent and school board members entered into the room five minutes before the start of the meeting. All seven of the board of education members, six males and one female, were present for the meeting. The board of education members sat at “U” shaped table facing the crowd. The meeting began with roll call and was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

The board president took a few minutes to welcome the community to the meeting and reviewed a few updates that were going on in the district. The special recognitions portion of the meeting followed and the district Director of Community Relations honored a high school wrestling team for their accomplishments at the state

tournament. Following the special recognition presentation, there was an opportunity for public comment in which no one had signed up previously to speak. During the Consent Agenda, the board members voted to approve previous regular session meeting minutes and approved a field trip for a high school to bring their students on.

The board of education proceeded to the next item on the agenda: committee reports. A member of the Applied Learning and Technology committee reviewed their committee report discussing topics such as alignment to common core, Title I grant use, and expanding after school programs. Additionally during the Applied Learning and Technology Committee reviewed the researchers request to conduct dissertation research in the district. One board member mentioned the reason for the approval of dissertation research with in their district is because “it is good for research in the field of Educational Leadership.” All recommendations called forth from the Applied Learning and Technology were approved by the board of education.

A board of education member from the Ways and Means/Site provided a committee report. He recommended for board approval a variety of financial actions with in the district. Examples include requests for the payment of bills, approval to accept donations to the district, and approval for temporary hiring for summer construction work to be paid for by budgeted funds. All requests from this committee were approved unanimously by the board of education. When questions arose during both committee reports, district administrators were called upon to elaborate and educate the board and members of the audience on specifics that were occurring in the district

schools. There was not, however, a report provided from the Personnel, Policy and Administration committee.

The board of education then reviewed the personnel action items on the agenda beginning with actions regarding certified personnel and non-certified personnel. Following the personnel items, the board reviews miscellaneous action items which included residency and discipline matters. A board member then reviewed the current Freedom of Information Status Report indicating there were two recent requests made; one by a snow removal bid company and the other from a food service company. At the conclusion of the meeting, the board president made a few announcements regarding upcoming events and scheduled activities to be aware of. The board adjourned to a closed session to review matters that pertained to an individual student discipline situation.

District “A” Observation Chart

For this observation, a T-Chart template was utilized to record information. This T-chart consisted of a page with a dividing line down the middle to separate the *descriptive notes* (portraits of the participants, a reconstruction of dialogue, a description of the physical setting, accounts of particular events, or activities) from the *reflective notes* (the researcher's personal thoughts such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices). Table 3 details the descriptive notes from the T-Chart created during board of education meeting which took place on March 17, 2014.

Table 3

*Descriptive Notes for Board of Education Meeting for School District “A” held on
March 17, 2014*

Agenda Item	Descriptive Observation Notes
Opening Items	The board of education meeting began with roll call and the pledge of allegiance.
Communications	The board of education president took time to communicate a few important items to the public. He encouraged parents to sign up for parent teacher conferences, announced when kindergarten registration will be, reminded parents and staff to take the 5 Essentials Survey online, wished everyone a safe spring break week and introduced a new assistant principal at an elementary school in the district.
Recognitions	The board of education recognized a high school’s wrestling team on their recent accomplishments at the state wrestling tournament. They recognized both individual wrestlers as well as the team. The room was filled with parents, students and members of the media to support the wrestlers. The team was recognized and all went to the front of the room to take a picture.
Questions/Comment Period	No one signed up for public comment.
Consent Agenda	Previous board of education meeting minutes were approved. Additional requests for schools within the district were approved.
For Action- Applied Learning and Technology Committee	A board of education member provided a report from this committee requesting a variety of approvals including; a request for approval to put elementary and middle school English/Language Arts resources on 30-day public review and a request for approval to put a new high school health textbook on 30-day public review. All requests were approved by the board of education. A district administrator provided an overview and summary of the districts status on the implementation of the common core.

Site/Ways and Means Committee	A board of education member provided a report from this committee requesting a variety of approvals including; a request to accept district monetary donations, a request to hire maintenance staff for summer help, and a request for approval of the computer refresh and teacher laptop technology initiative in an amount not to exceed \$3.8 million. All requests were approved by the board of education.
For Action- Personnel- Certified	There were no requests in this section of the board meeting.
For Action- Personnel- Non Certified	There were no requests in this section of the board meeting
For Action- Other	The board of education approved to have two students dis-enrolled because they were founded as non-residents. The board of education discussed and changed the wording of one request from the “dismissal” of a tenured teacher to a “resignation” of a tenured teacher. Additionally, the board of education decided to wait on making a decision on two student discipline cases.
Freedom of Information Status Report	Two companies, a snow removal service and a food service company, requested Freedom of Information requests for School District “A.”
Announcements/Scheduled Activities	A board of education member announced when the next regular schedule board of education meeting will be. Additionally, the board member reviewed the dates for Spring Break.
Adjourn to Closed Session	The board president announced that they will adjourn the meeting to a closed session to attend to matters pertaining to the student discipline situation that the board of education decided to wait for a decision on until they had further information.

District “A” Document Review

The researcher reviewed a variety of documents to collect data for the study.

Previous board of education meeting minutes from the years 2008-2013 were reviewed to learn more about the final decisions that were made regarding the reductions. The board of education meeting minutes were located on the school district’s website. There were

multiple ‘special’ board of education meetings during this time that were currently not available on the website. The researcher requested a copy of the ‘special’ board of education meeting minutes from the district Public Relations Administrator and the request was fulfilled within 24 hours.

The researcher also reviewed newspaper articles that related to the final decisions of the school district. There were multiple articles written that confirmed the final decisions of the board of education and also portrayed the effects of those decisions on the community.

Superintendent “A” provided a wide variety of supporting documentation that provided the researcher with an understanding of the administrative recommendations for cuts and the plan behind how the superintendent went about making those decisions. Superintendent “A” shared his agenda for a workshop done separately with the administration and the board of education where they identified multiple areas for reduction and rated each reduction until a final plan was in place that everyone was in agreement for. Superintendent “A” provided a summary of Budget Recommendations for the fiscal years of 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 outlining the specific administrative recommendations presented to the board of education each year.

District “A” Document Chart

Below is a chart sampling the major documents reviewed and the content relevant to this research.

Table 4

Document Chart for School District “A”

Source	Date	Title
Board of Education Meeting Minutes	August 2009- August 2014	Board of Education Meeting Notes
Internal Document	2009-2010 School Year	List of District Outside Consultants
Chicago Tribune	October 8 th , 2009	District “A” Starts Trimming Deficit by Cutting about 2 Million this year.
The Core	April, 2009	The Community Newsletter for School District “A”
Chicago Tribune	January 26, 2010	School District “A” May Cut 222 Jobs
Chicago Tribune	January 26, 2010	District “A” poised to save \$21 million, eliminate operating fund deficit
Chicago Tribune	January 29 th , 2010	School District “A” School Board Delays Vote on Most Proposed Cuts
ABC.go.com	February 12, 2010	21.7M in cuts for School District “A”
The Core	March, 2010	The Community Newsletter for School District “A”
Chicago Tribune	May 27 th , 2010	State owes District “A” \$23 Million; District Financial Picture Grim
Huffington Post Chicago	May 28, 2010	Schools in Trouble: Layoffs Could Top 20,000 in State School Districts

Internal Document	2010-2011 School Year	Budget Reduction Recommendations
Chicago Tribune	September 14, 2010	District “A” Projected Deficit at 6.7 Million
Chicago Magazine	September 20, 2010	Best Elementary Schools: Education’s Financial Crisis
Chicago Tribune	March 1, 2011	District “A” uses \$5.7M Federal Grant to Stave off Massive Layoffs
Chicago Sun Times	April 19, 2011	District “A” Schools Could Cut 112 Jobs
Local Newspaper	August 27, 2011	District “A” Facing 5.48 M 2011-2012 Budget Deficit
Internal Document	2011-2012 School Year	Budget Reduction Recommendations
Local Newspaper	February 28, 2012	District “A” Cuts 64 Jobs to Slash Budget Deficit
Chicago Tribune	February 28, 2012	District “A” Approves Cutting Equivalent of 64 full time positions
Local Newspaper	March 27, 2012	School Board Cuts 17 Positions
The Patch	May 31 st , 2012	Superintendent “A”: Education Funding Changes Could Cost District “A” Millions
Internal Document	2012-2013 School Year	Budget Reduction Recommendations
Chicago Tribune	September 24, 2013	School District “A” Budget Shows a Surplus
District “A” Website	Retrieved August 23, 2014	District “A” Organizational Chart
ISBE.net	Retrieved August 23, 2014	School District Report Card
Internal Document	N/A	Evaluation of Budget Recommendations

District “A” Data Comparison

The table below represents data collected from the researcher’s interview with Superintendent “A”, the observation of a board of education meeting and a document review of previous board of education meeting minutes, local newspaper articles, and supporting documentation provided by the superintendent. The information presented in the table below does not represent every word written, the information presented serves as a representative sample of these data displayed from the interview, observation, and document analysis as it relates to each of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique. These lenses have been utilized as the conceptual framework in which to analyze these data.

As a reminder to the reader, the utilitarianism lens can be described as a decision that is made based on what is best for the greatest amount of people (Mill, 2007). The deontological lens looks to establish the rightness of the action by determining if the decision could be universally applied to all (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). Ethic of care is grounded in the central ethical question: what does the “one cared for” require from us (Gilligan, 1977)? A decision grounded in the ethic of critique choose to raise difficult questions by critiquing both the laws themselves and the process used to determine if the laws are just (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Below these data are displayed from the study of “School District A” as they relate to each of these ethical lenses.

Table 5

Data from the Study of School District “A” as Related to Ethical Lenses

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business person at this point is the gatekeeper and causes me especially in light of the 40 million we have to cut and the hundreds of jobs that people lost causes me to really prioritize the initiatives or to have discussion with the board about prioritizing initiatives. I had 28 out of 30 principals recommend reduce our building budgets by 10%. Now I am not saying that every principal is happy and there were things that I recommended that I knew a high school principal would not want to lose a dean and I knew that, but I met with them before and I said I am recommending you lose a dean and I am doing it because of these comparable and we can agree to disagree but it is my job to make a recommendation. The counter balance strategies, anytime you're going to make the recommendation to make a cut, you have to tell me how we are going to counteract that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One board member mentioned the reason for the approval of dissertation research with in their district is because “it is good for research in the field of educational leadership.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was criticism from recent approval to create four new positions in the Technology department Board members assured the audience that the board wants to protect jobs, but must cut the budget to reduce the district’s anticipated deficit. The district’s three full-release mentors and several other teachers asked the board to reinstate the program which will be cut next year as part of the deficit reduction plan. The superintendent’s plan would eliminate 112.1 full-time equivalent administrative, certified, and non-certified positions, and make other operational and programmatic cuts to save about 7.5 million. The board encouraged administration to continue to comb the new fiscal plan for potential savings this year. Administration did that and came up with a list of eight potential areas where money can be saved. None of the eight areas directly impacts students, the main

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Utilitarianism			<p>priority of the districts deficit elimination strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This kind of targeted cut will save a significant amount of money but not directly affect classroom learning and teaching. • None of these projected reductions will be easy, but they must be made if we are to meet our goal of providing the best possible educational services to our students while also being good stewards of the community's resources.
Deontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like to have discussions with the board with regard to parameter. What are your expectations for the depths of reductions? What are the values? What are the parameters, the fences that you are going to put around me that I know this is where you want me to be? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school district provided the opportunity for community members to sign up for public comment prior to the start of the meeting. • The board of education meeting started promptly at 7pm. • Actions were presented to board for approval and voted upon. • The board of education approved to have two students dis-enrolled because they were founded as non-residents. • A board member then reviewed the current Freedom of Information Status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent added that he intends to bring a public recommendation to the Board at its January, meeting, and that all Board decisions must be made in public, by law. • Board members said they had to vote on those cuts Thursday, noting they must notify affected administrators by February 1st. • Public education remains the greatest example of the American Ideal, serving all students regardless of their socioeconomic, educational, racial or ethnic status, giving children of every background access to opportunities that they might not otherwise have.

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Deontology		Report indicating there were two recent requests made; one by a snow removal bid company and the other from a food service company.	
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlike my first eight years or so as superintendent I had a very strong collaborative relationship with the board. I don't now. I would and have advised the associate superintendent that he is their choice and that's important. They chose him and he needs to maintain that relationship. • Typically when we identify an initiative it's targeted on the five year strategic plan. • Now I would be hard pressed to say well "that's not worth it". Well, they are all worth it, and we want all of them. • We are not working on any secret covert operations here. You need to go back and talk to your staff. • So at one point in time the staff was sitting in the auditorium at one of the high schools hearing it. The staff meeting was intended to educate them on the state of finance that this is what the district relies upon in order to fund our programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When questions arose during committee reports, district administrators were called upon to elaborate and educate the board and members of the audience on specifics that were occurring in the district schools. • The board of education discussed and changed the wording of one request from the "dismissal" of a tenured teacher to a "resignation" of a tenured teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent presented the administrative recommendation for eliminating the district's anticipated operating fund deficit. • Information about district's deficit reduction elimination strategy is available on the district website. • The board president encourage the audience to take time over the next few weeks to read the proposal and comment on it through the district's online survey. • The district will schedule at least one public hearing in January to take additional public comment. • Thursday night's meeting in the auditorium at the local high school was the second night of public talks this week about the proposed cuts. • That commitment to every child anchors everything we do today, and steadies us against whatever may come tomorrow.

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every principal was required to go back and facilitate a meeting with their staff similar in nature to what I did with them regarding the depths of reduction. Not only did I encourage them and invite them to give us suggestions, but through their principal they had faculty meetings intended to identify. • These are hard decisions but are coming not only from me as a superintendent; they are coming from 30 building administrators. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our primary objective will be to minimize the impact on our students. • School District “A” board members backed off on a plan for mass layoffs, deciding instead to retain most positions by using a one-time \$5.7 million federal education jobs grant.
Critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of looking back, I would better navigate the political landscape. • I recommended disbanding the committees and going with the committee of the whole. The recommendation was denied based on tradition which that what they used to. We would rather remain dysfunctional than break tradition and I have to defend that. • I would bring less, maybe naiveté where the board’s predisposition to one level over another. • I want your (elementary principals) recommendation for middle school; I want 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board of education vice president stated that the ongoing critical comments made about the superintendent of schools are over the top and undeserved. While the superintendent makes recommendations the board ultimately decides on all personnel issues. • The administrative recommendation includes creating a “triple tier” bussing system to save about \$600,000. However, that would require changing bus times, which may be controversial.

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Critique	<p>your recommendation for high school. So now you get to look kind of from the outside in and say I am an elementary principal with 1,000 kids and I have an AP. But you are telling me the high school has one principal, three assistants, four or five deans and the ratio for deans is under 400, how?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We held community forums with the board. And if you enjoyed getting yelled at. I wouldn't do it differently because it needed to be done and I would rather give people the change to do that and feel they were heard. • Eliminate fifth grade band, that was political. I recommended that. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yet we know that any reduction in programs and staff will, to a certain degree, impact students. • More than 400 parents, students and teachers attended Thursday's special meeting, and many expressed the same concerns raised Monday.

Data Collection Process for School District "B"

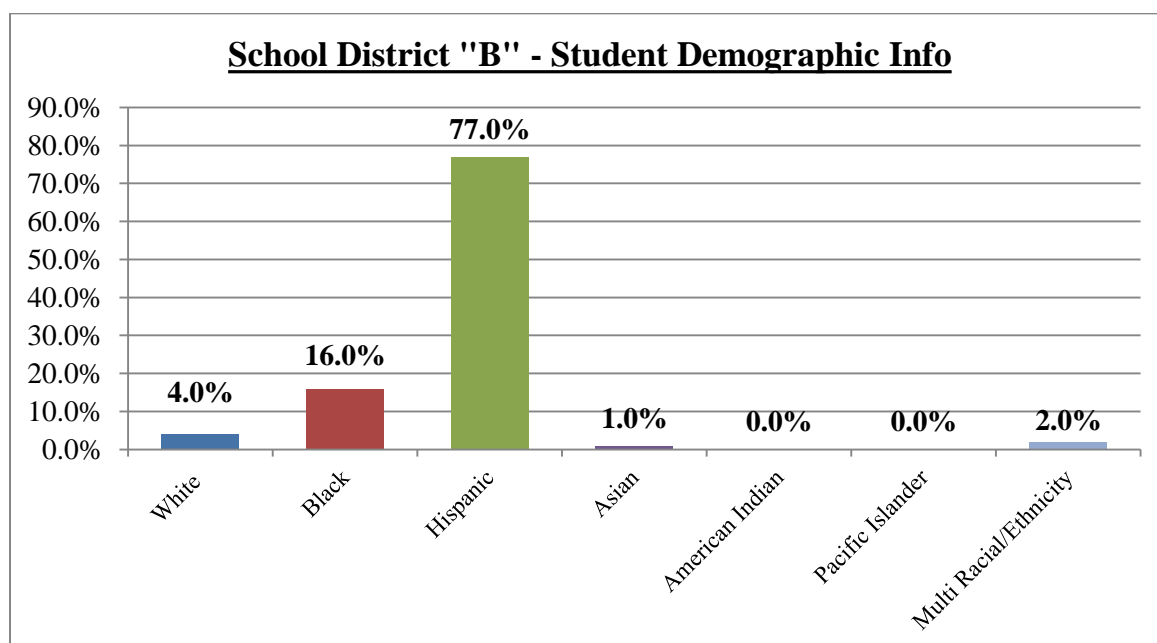
During the research process the researcher communicated with Superintendent "B" on multiple occasions for the purpose of member checking. On April 28, 2014 the researcher met with the superintendent to conduct the initial interview. On May 4, 2014 the researcher emailed Superintendent "B" with two in depth follow up questions from the interview. Superintendent "B" responded via email with his answers on May 5, 2014. On May 23, Superintendent "B" emailed the researcher a variety of district documents

including: the District 2009-2010 Staff Reduction Plan, the 2009-2010 Projected Revenues and Expenses & Balancing Plan, and the 2008-2009 Reduction in Force list for the District. On June 30, 2014 the researcher sent a copy of the transcription from their interview via email to the superintendent for his review along with three additional questions to help elaborate on a few topics that were discussed at the interview. The superintendent responded via email on July 3, 2014 stating he was unable to answer at that time because he was out of town for personal reasons. On July 21, 2014 the researcher emailed Superintendent “B” to review the questions that were sent via email a few weeks ago. Superintendent “B” requested that the researcher call rather than email to discuss the questions. On July 21, 2014 the researcher spoke with Superintendent “B” on the phone. On July 22, 2014, the researcher emailed Superintendent “B” with a transcript of their phone conversation to double check for accuracy. Superintendent “B” responded on July 24, 2014 with confirmation that what was sent was accurate. On August 11, 2014 the researcher reached out to Superintendent “B” with additional questions as another means to member check. On August 22, 2014 the researcher called Superintendent “B” to review these questions over the phone. The researcher followed up with a transcription of what was discussed on August 25, 2014. Superintendent “B” responded to the email on August 27, 2014 providing additional clarifying information.

School District “B”

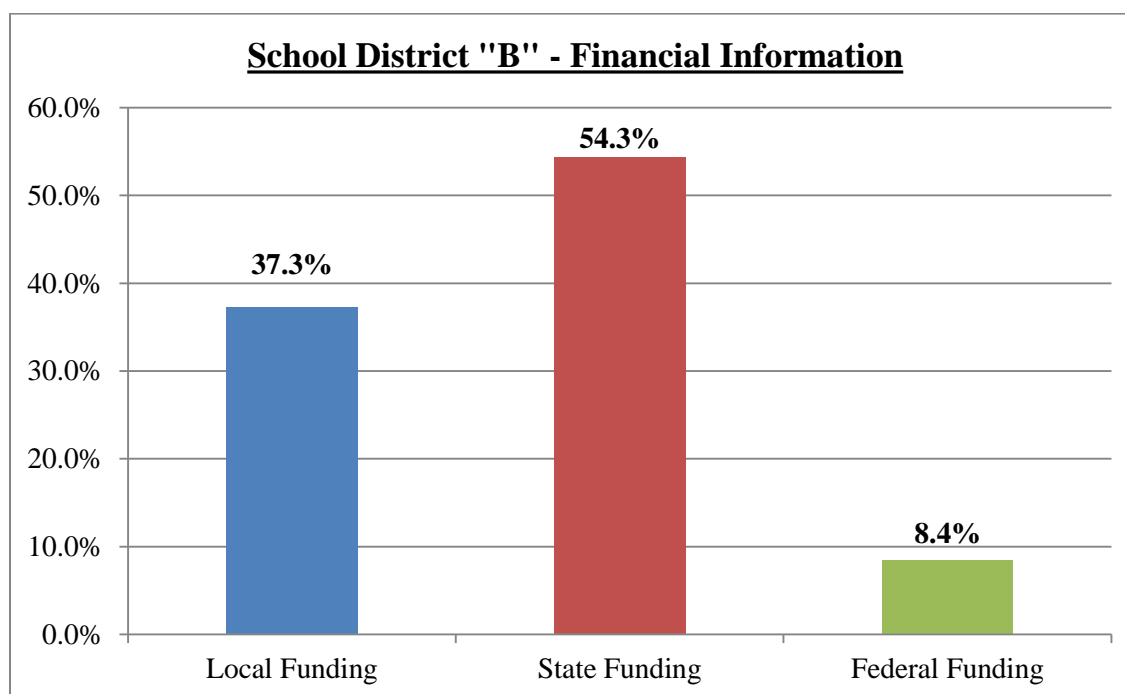
School District “B” serves nearly 17,000 students in preschool through grade 12. This district is located on Lake Michigan, south of the Wisconsin border in a depressed

community where there is minimal residential or commercial growth. The student body of the district is rich in diversity with the majority of their students being Hispanic, African-American, or Caucasian. The information below in Figure 8 displays the student demographic breakdown for School District “B” during the 2013-2014 school year. School District “B” has over 1,000 highly qualified teachers employed district wide and the instructional expenditure per pupil is \$6,638. This school district has high poverty levels and relies heavily on local and state funding (see Figure 9 for specific financial information).



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Figure 8. School District “B” – Student Demographic Information



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

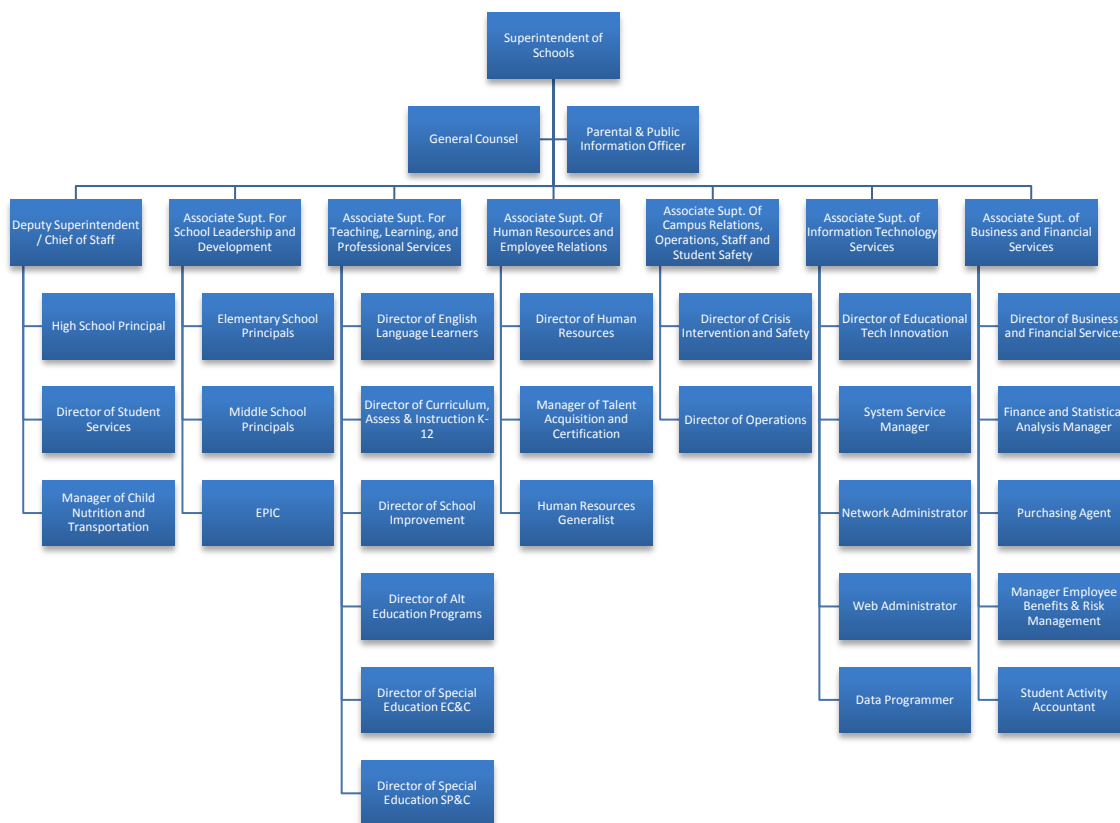
Figure 9. School District "B" – Financial Information



Source: School District "B" Website

Note. The above chart is the organizational structure School District "B" used during the time of the 2008 Financial Crisis.

Figure 10. School District "B" – Organizational Chart



Source: Document provided by Superintendent “B”

Note. The above chart is the current organizational structure for School District “B”.

Figure 11. School District “B” – Current Organizational Chart

The organizational structure used during the 2008 financial crisis and the current organizational structure differ in a variety of ways. Previously, the structure was split into two units with very specific departments- academics and operations. The leaders of these two units, the Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Academic Officer managed a team of directors aligned with the respective function and were the only direct reports to the superintendent. In the current structure the responsibilities formerly assigned to the Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Academic Officer are now spread amongst a wider

variety of Assistant/Associate superintendents with a focus on a specific function (leadership, human resources, operations, etc.). These Associate/Assistant superintendents all now report directly to the superintendent, increasing his direct reports from two to nine. The new structure also incorporates a General Counsel and Communication officer which was not present in 2008.

Semi-Structured Interviews

This chapter presents qualitative data that were obtained from the interview with Superintendent “B.” After obtaining consent from the respective superintendent, the researcher set up a time and date for a face to face, semi-structured interview. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for additional clarification questions to be asked in addition to the original interview protocol. The interview with Superintendent “B” was conducted on April 28, 2014, was held on the grounds of School District “B’s” Administrative Center, and lasted approximately 30 minutes in length. Completed transcripts were returned to the superintendent for any corrections, clarifications or changes as a means to member check (Merriam, 2009).

As a part of the interview protocol, five demographic questions were asked to gain an understanding of the superintendent’s background and experience in the field of education and how obtained knowledge in school finance was acquired. The questions and the responses to the questions are depicted below in chart form along with a brief explanation.

Table 6

Superintendent “B” Demographics

Questions 1-5	Superintendent B
How long have you been a superintendent in this district?	8 years
How long have you worked in educational administration prior to obtaining a position as the superintendent?	25 years
Did you work in this district prior to becoming the superintendent?	Yes-previous position included Deputy Superintendent of Academic Achievement
How many years of your administrative career have taken place in an Illinois school district?	9.5 years
How did you acquire your knowledge in school finance?	Graduate coursework and administrative experience

As part of the semi-structured interview protocol, the questions were constructed to provide an understanding of how the 2008 financial recession affected the leadership and decision-making of Superintendent “B.” The semi-structured format “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new idea’s on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). During the interview with Superintendent “B,” the researcher asked questions that were in addition to the original interview protocol to gain a deeper and richer understanding of the situation at hand. The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews with Superintendent “B” are listed below.

Superintendent “B” Semi-Structured Interview

General leadership. As the instructional leader of the district what is currently your top priority? The top priority is student achievement and to make certain that the services that we are providing are mirroring themselves in our students being successful in whatever it takes so they are successful when they leave us.

What are the metrics of success that you use to measure whether or not a particular decision is successful? A metric of success is a lack of disagreement amongst our various constituents. Even if they are upset I don't see that as an unsuccessful decision being made. I have a responsibility too, to build the capacity of people beyond their understanding of what they see and what they perceive is happening. Even though there may be conflict associated with the decisions being made, it is important we are able to make certain that the decisions serve our children well, and that is my metric of success.

Describe your work with your administrative team. What are the most common topics on your agendas and in your meetings? It's all about teaching and learning best practices, how we can leverage scarce resources and make the best of them so that our children are, in fact, the beneficiary of our efforts. Also, topics linked towards ensuring that our students are prepared individuals ready to go out into the world and be the best citizen that they can be. Whether it is to further their education, going to the job market, or to be an entrepreneur, whatever that may be.

Our organizational structure is the board of education and the superintendent of schools. I have a deputy superintendent chief of staff, an associate superintendent for

teaching and learning, an associate superintendent for leadership and these are the people that supervise the schools. Then, there is the associate superintendent for teaching, learning and professional practices and she supervises all of these directors. There is an associate superintendent for human resources and an associate superintendent for student and staff safety. We have an associate superintendent for information and technology and we also have a business and finances person.

I meet with my cabinet weekly. I meet with the cabinet which consists of the associate superintendents. They sit in a cabinet meeting once a week. The following week it is a one on one individual meeting with them. The cabinet meeting is general where everybody is present and we talk about district issues and concerns, things that are coming down the pike, our response to proposed issues, and our plans and our priorities. I seek to understand what they are doing, how I can support them and what is it that they need from me. Individually, we meet twice a month on cabinet meeting day because at times it is the same. It is every Wednesday starting at 10:00. But on the opposite week of cabinet meetings, I meet with each individual cabinet member for one hour where they get to go into detail and laser beam through whatever issues and concerns that they are experiencing. Once a month, we meet with the principals. The principals actually report to associate superintendents for school leadership and development. I am a part of that meeting and I sit in on those meetings to keep a pulse on what is going on.

Was your organizational structure during the time of the financial crisis different than your current organizational structure? If so can you briefly explain the difference? Yes, I had only two people directly reporting to me at that point; the

Chief Academic Officer and Chief Financial Officer. Everything that had to do with curriculum and instruction fell under the role and responsibility of the Chief Academic Officer and everything that had to do with Operations and Finance fell under the role and responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer.

Describe your relationship with your Business Manager? How does the Business Manager affect or influence your decision making? My business manager is now the acting or interim Associate Superintendent for Business and Financial Services. It's an intimate relationship, if you will. Because that person is consulted before any major decisions are made that have financial impact for our district. You were here most recently when we were trying to avert a teacher strike and we successfully have done that. But, it was predicated upon the finances that we would have to be able to sustain us if we were able to avert it.

Describe your relationship with your current board of education. In your work with the board of education do you use subcommittees or a committee of the whole structure? Explain why you chose one over the other. My board of education has been a very supportive board. While I have to please seven masters, I tend to do that for at least five of the seven on an average day. My staying here as long as I have is a credit to the relationship that I have with my board because I am the only employee that they have. If that relationship were to just disintegrate, either they could ask me to leave or I would say I am ready to leave.

We use a committee of the whole structure. We have monthly meetings that are called "student achievement." That is where we look at all of our academic areas of

responsibility. We report out to them where we are in various projects. We talk to them about proposed projects to get their buy-in. Generally, what we do during that time is get them prepared for any future board agenda item that could be coming down the pike to explain the need for the why's, the how's, the where for's, and how much is going to cost and how we're going to pay for it, those types of things.

We used to have the subcommittees but there were lots of meetings and people do not have the time. So, when the board wanted to be an informed decision maker and just because there were representatives of the board that served in those committees it was still incumbent upon me as a superintendent to insure that both those participants who were in the meeting know what was going on. They had a responsibility to get the information to the other members of the board and that did not always happen. The time and energy that I was spending getting minutes written and disseminating to those people, it did not bear the same level of understanding the board members would have had, had they been privy to the same discussion as their peers.

Budget questions. Does your school district have a tax cap? Yes

Please explain what sources of revenue your school district relies on to operate on a yearly basis. Primarily grants and sales tax. We do not borrow anymore. We used to borrow a lot but we are living within our means and those are the major revenue sources that we have. We also rely on Federal, State and Local sources for funding.

When you mentioned that your district is now living within your means, can you explain why you decided to stop borrowing money? Would you say that your

decision to stop borrowing money was a result of the 2008 financial recession?

Before I was superintendent, the collective bargaining unit would bargain items into the budget that the district was unable to afford, so money was borrowed in order to comply with the collective bargaining agreement. The district no longer practices the method of “borrowing” and will only bargain items that the district can afford staying with in the budget. We now live with in our means.

How does General State Aid play a role in your school district’s budget?

How much does your school district depend on this assistance from the state? How has it affected your budget planning process since the financial recession in 2008?

Significantly, because we’re a school district that gets an added bump in the monies that we receive from general state aid because of our poverty count. We’re 100% poverty.

General State Aid is our life’s blood. We get 89% or more of our revenues from the state.

Because of our status with our poverty count we have always ended up being a little bit better than what is projected for most school districts. We also receive 4 to 6 million dollars more each year than what most people are getting because of our poverty count.

2008 financial recession. When you were informed of the decrease in funding from the state what process did you take to overcome this challenge?

We met with our legislators and we sent them letters sharing with them what impact it is going to have. I’m also a member of an advocacy group of superintendents and we have bonded together to make our messages the same and we bombard our legislators to know how significant the proposed cuts would have on our districts. We went a step further and told them how those will pan out if they go forward.

How did you communicate with the various stakeholders of your school district? I notify my board, number one. I do it in a public forum. I get them involved and to know what is coming down the pike and anybody who's in the listening audience. We inform them of what's happening and we put out press releases to get the community involved.

With your other administrators, and the teachers within the district, would you expect them to come to the board meeting? They are generally in the audience. I don't know if they were there the night you were there were. We normally have a cross-section of the community; we normally have a cross section representing administrators, teachers, community members, and the teacher unions. We do not generally see any other union representation there but the teacher union presidents are generally there.

When you communicated this with your board in the Board of Education meeting, do you remember there being a large crowd for this one? We always have a great crowd. And, some of the things that we have mentioned, too, with financial impact have resonated with people in the community. They have reached out because they have relationships too with the elected legislators. I have received follow-up calls from the legislator, not because I called them but because they were getting calls from the constituents.

What factors or considerations did you bring into your decision making regarding reductions in the area of teaching and learning, personnel, and extracurricular? What final reductions were made in these areas? We operate from the premise that if any reductions are going to take place they will take place outside of

the classroom. So, that's our priority. Our board has been very clear about that so, it's always been administrative support and extraneous things that we have looked at cutting when that time has come. We also got the American Reinvestment Recovery Act of 2009 (ARRA) monies that were geared toward saving teaching jobs. So, we were able to use those monies in other ways too, to salvage other jobs as well. We cut personnel positions across the board. We cut safety and security, custodians, administrators, coordinators, specialists, directors, managers, people who were housed outside of classrooms or school buildings.

Can you elaborate on the effects of the ARRA money received from the government? How did it help and specifically what was this money used towards in the district? Were any positions saved due to this additional money from the government? The board of education initially approved cuts to be made that were all a part of the reduction in force based on district seniority prior to receiving the ARRA monies. Upon receiving the ARRA monies from the government the district was in fact able to salvage these teaching jobs that were previously approved to be cut. All but eleven positions that were previously approved to be cut were saved by the ARRA monies. However, those 11 cuts were positions that lay outside the classroom. Examples of positions that were cut include; tech/webmaster and central office positions.

Is this information public anywhere? Would this information have been in the board of education meetings, specifically, which jobs that were cut? I would trust it would be in the minutes.

Do you have a list of the specific titles of jobs that we eliminated during the 2008 Financial Recession? There is currently not a way to obtain this list of specific cuts made and the only list available is the staff reduction plan that has been provided. The information system has changed over since that year and HR no longer has this list on file. The specific cuts I can provide you are from my recollection of events which include:

- (1) Assistant Athletic Director
- (1) Public Relations Officer
- (1) IEP Technology Coordinator
- (1) Director of Payroll
 - (1) Assistant to the Director in Accounts Payable
 - (1) Assistant to the Director in Receivables
 - (1) Assistant to the Director in Purchasing
- (5-7) IEP Facilitators
- (2) Receptionists at the front desk
- (2) Three Switch board operators reduced to one
- (2) Technology administrators

Do you remember if the board of education was on the same page in regards to these cuts? They vacillated depending on who the people were in the community. They may have been friends and, of course, they are elected by the people. We got some resistance and they flip-flopped. However, we did stay clear of the classroom.

When a member of your leadership team disagreed with one of your decisions in an area where reductions were made, describe how you responded.

Could you provide an example of this in action? Generally, the way we are organized here in regards to the decisions, I am the superintendent here and I have the global picture. In my organizational framework, I have a superintendent over various areas. Just two weeks ago, the associate superintendent for teaching and learning and professional practices called to our attention that one of the programs operating out of a high school was not giving us the bang for the amount of dollars that we were spending on it. And they were seeking to modify the curriculum that was specified for a select group of kids. It is called CSP and it is designated for two houses. We have what's called a smaller learning community operating at the high school. We have nine houses and, of those nine houses, two of them are CSP's. There is one program on each major campus of the high school. We have one high school but located on two different campuses. They are separated by at least a mile and a half. The students who were in those houses are not optimizing the resources we have in place there. One of the goals that the board had was to make college study, teaching and learning practices be a part of all houses not just those two segregated houses. There was a proposal being made to do just that. While the board originally had wanted us to go in that vein one of the board members is aligned with one of the house leaders where that program is housed. The house leader is against it and therefore the board member was in fact, saying that it wasn't a good idea. I reminded her in a public meeting, you were the greatest proponent of this when it came about three years ago. And, you asked us what we can do about it. And, I said, here we are and had

been working furtively about doing this and now it comes to you and you're changing your position. I, in essence, I may have cut off my nose despite my face, but I publically challenged the resistance that I was getting from this one board member. This board member was trying to poison the idea with other board members. I just brought her right back to the point and time about where we were and she has not mentioned it to me since. You have to be truthful and you have to know that if you are in this for the right reason it should not matter that the decision is not going to be met with support from your best friend or not. It's what we're doing for the children whom we serve. It is not about the adults who like the idea or do not like the idea. If we are doing it for the right reason, it is going to come out in the wash that what we are doing is either bad or good because it was bad or good for children.

If you can, tell me about a time that you faced with a tough financial decision in your school district. Please, explain why you made the decision and explain the outcome of making your decision. Every day is a tough decision. I'm trying to think of the one that's the greatest. Financially related, it had to have been the year we laid off a number of people. We laid off 41 people.

Do you remember what year that was? Two-thousand eight or nine. I think it was 2009. It happened in the 2008-2009 school year so, it would have been 2009.

Do you remember about how much money you saved by doing that? The specific numbers escapes me but we made around 2.1 million dollars in cuts. I have seen so many numbers on a long-term basis. I can get somebody that can give you that specific

information but I would not have it. I see too many numbers and too many iterations, I would not have it.

Reflection question. Reflecting back, would you make any changes or adjustments to your final decisions regarding reductions? If so what would you have changed and please explain why? I think it would be counterproductive and it would be counterintuitive, too. Because, as I have shared with you, the structure that we had the time that happened it was the superintendent and reporting directly to the superintendent was the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief Financial Officer. Because the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief Financial Officer were closer to the people where the cuts were coming from, I relied heavily on their ability to analyze the circumstances of the situation, the fiscal impact, and the programmatic impacts and to make those recommendations to me. I allowed them to do that and I received their recommendations and I acted upon their recommendations. There were some that I thought did go too deep, and I did suggest that they would go back and re look at it. But, again, when they went back and looked at it, I accepted with modification what they brought to me.

Do you know if your Chief Financial Officer and Chief Academic Officer reached out to the teachers or the administrators at the buildings? Not the teachers because these were all administrative in nature. So, there were no teachers. Yes, they did get reports back from their subordinates and the people whom they supervised, because they were probably doing the same thing that I was modeling. Getting the people closest to where the areas were for proposed cuts, to weigh in on the impact of that decision.

Overall, how did the community feel about your final decisions regarding reductions? They applauded us because we stayed away from the classrooms.

How did the board feel about your final decisions regarding reductions? One board member, in particular, was sort of miffed at the big global picture that was originally presented and the way it was actually carried out was a little bit too much exposure for him and the feedback he got back from the constituencies. While it ended up being a good thing he said, in the future what he would like that before we unveil what our plan is that we have done the vetting of it privately or behind closed doors before we could come out with it.

What the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief Financial Officer? After everything was said and done, were they happy with the final decisions made? Yes, they owned the recommendations because it was their recommendations to me that we honored. We didn't go against anything that they proposed.

Did they have any backlash? If they did, they didn't share it with me. They did talk about people talking about their jobs being enlarged because of a loss of personnel. Where there was significant impact, people were recompensed a portion of the monies that we saved to take on the added responsibilities that were clearly above and beyond what their job description would ordinarily require. All the job descriptions under which they were being hired were being changed.

The fact that you stayed away from teaching and learning is excellent because I do not think every school district can say that during these tough

economic times. We could not do it. Our board was very clear in its direction to us. If you are going to cut let us do it from the other way. Let's not hurt any of our children.

District "B" Observation

The researcher attended a board of education meeting on Tuesday, April 8, 2014. All regular board of education meetings are held in the District's Administrative Center. Closed session begins at 5:00 pm and public session begins at 7:00 pm. The researcher arrived to the board of education meeting at 6:30 pm. Upon entering the board room, the researcher first had to be cleared through security. Sign up for public comment was located inside the board room in the back right hand corner. The researcher signed up for public comment with the purpose of asking for board approval to conduct dissertation research with in the school district.

The board of education seats are located behind a locked door and are elevated on a stage arranged in a straight line facing the crowd. The school district administrators were all present and located in the back of the board of education room, behind the community members. The superintendent and board of education entered the room five minutes prior to the beginning of the public session and they all took their seats. There were six board of education members present for the meeting, four females and two males. Prior to the beginning of the meeting, the researcher personally introduced herself to the superintendent as this was the first time they had met face to face. The researcher informed the superintendent that she had signed up for public comment to request to officially conduct research in the school district.

The meeting began with the board of education president's welcome and her request for the researcher to lead the group in the pledge of allegiance. Next the board explained to the crowd that there were no special recognitions or presentations scheduled for tonight. The board then proceeded with the approval of previous board of education meeting minutes. Opportunity for public comment came next, and the researcher was the only individual present that had signed up for comment. She introduced herself and explained her reason for her attendance and requested approval to conduct research in the district and asked if there were any additional questions she could answer at that time. The board of education was extremely supportive of her request, did not have any questions for the researcher, and wished her the best of luck as she progresses through the process.

The next item on the agenda was titled Purchases and Contracts. The board reviewed various items that required board approval including the request for life safety work to be done at a school within district, the request to lease three automobiles for the driver education program, the request for approval of the contract with a communications company for District Internet Access, and a request for approval for a ratified custodial and maintenance contract. All motions were approved by the board of education. Prior to voting on the request to lease three automobiles for the driver education program, a board member asked "would it be more cost effective to purchase the vehicles, use them for an extended period of time, and then trade them in?" A discussion followed resulting in the agreement of a district administrator to prepare a cost analysis between purchasing and leasing three cars for the Driver Education Program.

Next, the board of education reviewed the Personnel Items on the agenda. With only a few minor corrections and adjustments made, the board approved the recommendation of the administration for the appointments, resignations, requests for leaves of absences, retirements, and terminations found on separate documents provided at the board meeting. The board acknowledged and applauded the careers of the retiree's and thanked them for their service to the students and district. The superintendent announced and recognized the appointment of a new director with in the district.

The board president acknowledged that there were no grants or donations to the district to acknowledge at this time so they moved on to the next item on the agenda which was the request for the adoption of revised policies and technical changes to specified policies. The motion carried by the board of education.

The board proceeded to review the district financial reports and approved the motion to ratify the first processing of board bills and manual request check request payments. The next item on the agenda was titled "Reports and Presentations." A board member noted that the Operations Services Committee and the Student Achievement Committee had met and a budget workshop had been held. The superintendent reported out on upcoming activities within the district. Also at this time the seventh board of education member, a male, had just arrived and entered into the board of education seating area.

The superintendent noted the receipt of a historical document from a former student. A copy of a high school graduation program from the June of 1903 had been found and sent to the district for display. A district administrator placed the document on

an overhead for the people in attendance to view and reviewed the details of this program. Following this brief presentation, the superintendent introduced the building administrators who were present for the meeting located in the back of the board room.

The board president gave a brief report with updates on activities and events she has attended and also plans on attending in the district. Another board member provided the delegate report and also provided a brief update on the activities and events she has attended and also plan on attending in the district. Next, the board reviewed six student discipline cases where each student was being recommended for expulsion. After reviewing each case individually, the board motioned to approve the expulsion of all six students.

The board then proceeded to review the legal reports on the agenda for the evening, approving a donor's request for indemnification against any action arising from his sponsorship of a class field trip to Lincoln Park Zoo. After legal reports, each board of education member was provided with the opportunity to say a few comments to the public. Each member took about five minutes to report out on what they have participated in recently with in the district and showed their support for the teachers, administrators and staff in the district.

Following the board member time was a motion to adjourn the meeting. The president called for a vote and all members present voted aye whereupon the president declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned.

District “B” Observation Chart

For this observation, a T-Chart template was utilized to record information. This T-chart consisted of a page with a dividing line down the middle to separate the *descriptive notes* (portraits of the participants, a reconstruction of dialogue, a description of the physical setting, accounts of particular events, or activities) from the *reflective notes* (the researcher's personal thoughts such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices). Table 7 details the descriptive notes from the T-Chart created during board of education meeting which took place on April 8, 2014.

Table 7

Descriptive Notes for Board of Education Meeting for School District “B” held on April 8, 2014

Agenda Item	Descriptive Observation Notes
Call to Order	The board of education president called the meeting to order.
Roll Call	The board of education clerk called the roll.
Pledge of Allegiance	Board of education president asked the researcher to lead the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance
Special Recognition and Presentations	There were no recognitions or presentations
Approval of Meeting Minutes	The open session meeting minutes were approved from the regular meeting on March 11, 2014.
Opportunity for Public Comment	The researcher was the only person that signed up for public comment. She walked up to the podium, introduced herself, explained her reason for her attendance, requested approval to conduct research in the district and asked if there were any additional questions she could answer at that time.

Purchases and Contracts	<p>The board reviewed items that required board approval including the request for life safety work to be done at a school with in district, the request to lease three automobiles for the driver education program.</p> <p>One board of education member asked the district administrator “would be more cost effective to purchase the vehicles, use them for an extended period of time, and then trade them in?” There was a brief discussion regarding the number of miles driven, length of service, total financial outlay, lease/purchase agreement, and maintenance and insurance. The district administrator agreed to do a cost analysis.</p> <p>Additional requests included approval for a contract with a communications company for District Internet Access and for a ratified custodial and maintenance contract.</p>
Personnel Items	<p>A board of education member acknowledged the hard work and efforts from the teachers and staff members retiring and thanked them for their service.</p> <p>The board of education recognized a new Campus Director appointed at the high school level. She stood to be recognized.</p>
Grants and Other Donations	There were no grants or donations to consider.
Other	The board requested approval for the adoption of revised policies and technical changes to specified policies.
Reports and Presentations	<p><u>Committee Report</u></p> <p>A board member noted that the Operations Services Committee and the Student Achievement Committee had met.</p> <p><u>Superintendent Report</u></p> <p>The superintendent reported out on various dates for upcoming activities including: teacher contract negotiations, a community gala, the high school award ceremony. He also reviewed the dates for when school resumes after spring break.</p> <p>During the superintendent’s report a male board of education member entered the meeting for the first time this evening.</p> <p>The superintendent noted the receipt of a copy of an old high school graduation program from 1903. A district administrator</p>

	<p>portrayed this on the screen for crowd to view and provided history on the document.</p> <p>The superintendent acknowledged all of the administrators present in the crowd.</p> <p><u>The President's Report</u> The board of education president explained that she has been invited to participate in an outdoor education activity. She explained the date set for the luncheon with the mayor is on May 12, 2014 and encouraged fellow board members to notify the superintendent immediately if they plan to attend.</p> <p><u>Delegate Report</u> A board of education member spoke about her attendance at the National School Boards Association Conference</p>
Information Items	The board members approved the revisions on an investments policy. The also approved a new policy in debt management planning.
Old Business	There was no old business discussed
New Business	One board member acknowledged the Information Technology department for the launch of the new district website.
Student Discipline Matters	Six student discipline matters were reviewed and resolutions were approved. No names were provided and students names were represented with letters and numbers (Example xx4588, xx2731)
Legal Reports	The board reviewed the indemnification of a field trip sponsor. The principal from the school in which the students participating in the field trip were from offered more background information about why the sponsor wanted to do this. Lincoln Park Zoo's kangaroo recently had a baby and a student at this school won the contest for the rights to name the baby. The sponsor wanted to pay to bring the class out to the zoo but asked for indemnification against any action arising from his sponsorship of the field trip. The board of education approved this request.
Board of Education Member Time	<p>Each board member took time to speak to the public. Board member "A"- explained that NSBA has taken a very proactive stance in support of the current movement to "Stand up for Public Schools."</p> <p>Board member "B"- announced that the community's township</p>

	<p>is holding a reunion of employee's who had worked at the Wire Mill.</p> <p>Board member "C"- noted her attendance at a school's art show, spring band concert, the Military Ball, and the NSBA conference.</p> <p>Board member "D"- noted that he had recently attended the special needs prom.</p> <p>Board member "E"- commented on the number of building administrators present in the meeting.</p> <p>Board member "F"- noted that the elementary art show "was excellent!"</p>
Adjournment	The motion was carried to reconvene in closed session for the purpose of discussion concerning teacher contract negotiations.

District "B" Document Review

The researcher reviewed a variety of documents to collect data for the study.

Previous board of education meeting minutes from the years 2008-2013 were reviewed to learn more about the final decisions that were made regarding the reductions. Initially, the board of education meeting minutes were not located on the school district's website, so an email was sent to the board of education secretary to obtain access to those minutes. The board of education secretary fulfilled the researcher's request within five days of her initial request. At the end of the 2013-2014 fiscal school year the board of education meeting minutes became unavailable and a second request was submitted to the board of education secretary to gain access to the previous minutes.

The researcher also reviewed newspaper articles that related to the final decisions of the school district. There were articles written in the local newspaper that helped clarify the final decisions of the board of education and also portrayed the effects of those decisions on the community.

Superintendent “B” provided the researcher with a copy of the school districts current organizational chart at the time of the interview together. He later sent the researcher a copy of the budget reduction plan from 2009-2010 school year which enclosed generic titles of positions that were eliminated or reduced. Additionally Superintendent “B” provided a copy of the board of education meeting minutes that enclosed a copy of the Reduction in Force by Seniority list of positions that the board approved prior to receiving the ARRA monies from the government.

District “B” Document Chart

Below is a chart sampling the major documents reviewed and the content relevant to this research.

Table 8

Document Chart for School District “B”

Source	Date	Title
The Chicago Sun Times	September 26, 2008	School District “B” Receives Grant for Low-Income At-Risk Students
Internal Document	April 17, 2009	Staff Reduction Plan for 09-10
Internal Document	April 17, 2009	School District “B” Local Education Fund Projected Revenues and Expenses & Balancing Plan FY 09-10
Internal Document	April 17, 2009	Reduction in Force by Seniority list
The News Sun	March 21, 2009	School Debts Grow to Offset Tardy State
Community Talk	June 17, 2009	State Budget Cuts and District “B”
The News Sun	September 23, 2009	Cuts in Athletic Programs

		May be Less Than a Year Away
The News Sun	May 13, 2010	School Nurse Layoffs Aired
The News Sun	June 3, 2010	School District Looks to Teachers to Shave Deficit- Salary freezes, Pay Cuts, Larger Classes
The News Sun	June 3, 2010	P.E.P Educates 200 At-Risk Kids- Without State Funding, Preschoolers to Lose Program
The News Sun	September 6, 2011	Letters to the Editor
The News Sun	September 22, 2011	Letters to the Editor
The News Sun	September 23, 2011	Neighborhood Schools Alleviate Need for Busing
The News Sun	October 9, 2013	Head Start Program Feels Pressure
The News Sun	January 1, 2014	Presence of Community Cops on High School Campuses to Continue
Internal Document	April 28, 2014	Current District Organizational Chart
Board of Education Meeting Minutes	August 2009- August 2014	Board of Education Meeting Notes
The Chicago Tribune	October 2, 2014	School District “B” teachers strike after contract talks break down
The Chicago Tribune	October 30, 2014	School District “B”, teachers come to terms after month long strike

District “B” Data Comparison

The table below represents data collected from the researcher’s interview with Superintendent “B,” the observation of a board of education meeting and a document review of previous board of education meeting minutes, local newspaper articles, and supporting documentation provided by the superintendent. The information presented in

the table below does not represent every word written, the information presented serves as a representative sample of these data displayed from the interview, observation, and document analysis as it relates to each of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique. These lenses have been utilized as the conceptual framework in which to analyze these data.

The utilitarianism lens can be described as a decision that is made based on what is best for the greatest amount of people (Mill, 2007). The deontological lens looks to establish the rightness of the action by determining if the decision could be universally applied to all (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). Ethic of care is grounded in the central ethical question: what does the “one cared for” require from us (Gilligan, 1977)? A decision grounded in the ethic of critique choose to raise difficult questions by critiquing both the laws themselves and the process used to determine if the laws are just (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Below these data are displayed from the study of School District “B” as they relate to each of these ethical lenses.

Table 9

Data from the Study of School District “B” as Related to Ethical Lenses

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So even though there may be conflict associated with the decision that’s made, if we are able to make certain that it serves our children and our children well. That’s my metric of success. • It’s all about teaching and learning best practices, how we can leverage scarce resources and make the best of them so that our children are, in fact, the beneficiary of our efforts. To ensure that they are prepared individuals ready to go out into the worked and be the best citizen that they can be. Be it for further education to going to the job market, to be an entrepreneur, whatever that may be. • Well, we operate from the premise that if any reductions are going to take place they will take place outside of the classroom. So, that’s our priority. Our board has been very clear about that so, it’s always been administrative support and extraneous things that we have looked at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board of education was extremely supportive of her request to conduct research in the district, did not have any questions for the researcher, and wished her the best of luck as she progresses through the process. • Prior to voting on the request to lease three automobiles for the driver education program, a board member asked “would it be more cost effective to purchase the vehicles, use them for an extended period of time, and then trade them in?” A discussion followed resulting in the agreement of a district administrator to prepare a cost analysis between purchasing and leasing three cars for the Driver Education Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In remarks to the nurses present, the superintendent said “you were not targeted because of the services,” add that with the district’s looming 9.74 million budget shortfall, “we need to prioritize what we can keep and what we can let go.” • “I’m asking, I’m begging- people step up,” said a board member, repeating a past concept to cut pay from top administrators through lower paid teachers and start members on a graduated scale. “It’s a common sense approach; there is only so much money we’re going to be able to save out of non-salary decreases.” • The recommendation of the administration was: that the board of education approve an increase in the high school athletic fee’s from 50.00 to 100.00 and initiate a middle school athletic fee of 25.00 for Fiscal Year of 2009-2010. The motion was carried. • The superintendent commented that members of the administration had

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Utilitarianism	<p>cutting when that time has come.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We cut personnel positions across the board. We cut safety and security, custodians, administrators, coordinators, specialists, directors, managers, people who were housed outside of classrooms or school buildings. • They (the board) vacillated because, depending on who the people were in the community. They may have been friends and, of course, they are elected by the people. We got some resistance and know they flip-flopped. But we did stay clear of the classroom. • Where there was significant impact, people were recompensed a portion of the monies that we saved to take on the added responsibilities that were clearly above and beyond what their job description would ordinarily require. All the job descriptions under which they were being hired was being changed. • We couldn't do it (cut teaching and learning). Our board was very clear in its 		<p>been asked to make recommendations for budget reductions that would have the least impact on the core program of the district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board is called upon to make the difficult decisions. The intent of the board is to make the district better. • Since implementing this initiative, the district has added 750,000 to 1.1 million back to its coffers each year and has used these savings to offset the mounting transportation deficit and for other high priority educational services and program to our students. • From the comments that have been broadcast either in the media or through written and oral testimonies, families are confusing issues that affect their children's safety and should be addressed through other governmental jurisdictions. As a school district, our primary responsibility is in delivering instructional services; therefore improving academics is our most important mission. • Nobody wants to make cuts. Rather, he would like to be able to offer more enrichment

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Utilitarianism	<p>direction to us. If you're going to cut let us do it from the other way. Let's not hurt any of our children. We argue that it's been hurting the children, too, because of the support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, they did get reports back from their subordinates. And the people whom they supervised. Because they were probably doing the same thing that I was modeling. Getting the people closest to where the areas were for proposed cuts, to weigh in on the impact of that decision. • They (community) applauded us because we stayed away from the classrooms. 		<p>programs. The board and administration are seriously attempting to find a solution that is the least detrimental to the overall program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the district wants to provide as much as possible for its students, it is not possible to buy what the district cannot pay for and difficult decisions had to be made. He encouraged everyone to look at the success stories of the district's students and be proud of what they have accomplished. While he is not happy with the current financial situation, the Board will try to minimize the damage caused by it. • Superintendent "B" thanked speakers for their impassioned remarks and commented that during the past 5 days, amicable discussions had been held. He expressed his belief that teachers are the backbone of the district; it is not his wish to disrespect or dishonor anyone. The district is grappling with fiscal issues.
Deontology	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board reviewed six student discipline cases where each student was being recommended for expulsion. After 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The superintendent reiterated the statutory requirement that probationary teachers must be notified not less than 45 days prior

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Deontology		<p>reviewing each case individually, the board motioned to approve the expulsion of all six students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With only a few minor corrections and adjustments made, the board approved the recommendation of the administration for the appointments, resignations, requests for leaves of absences, retirements, and terminations found on separate documents provided at the board meeting. 	<p>to the end of the school term if their service will be discontinued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district had received a prestigious award from the Illinois Association of School Business Officials for excellence in compliance with national standards for full disclosure and transparency in fiscal matters.
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student achievement. To make certain that the services that we are providing are mirroring themselves in our students being successful in whatever it is they take after they leave us. You have to be truthful and you have to know that if you're in this for the right reason it shouldn't matter that the decision is not going to be met with support from your best friend or not. It's what we're doing for the children whom we serve. It's not about the adults who like the idea or don't like the idea. If we're doing it for the right reason, it's going to come out in the wash that what we're doing is either bad or good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each member took about five minutes to report out on what they have participated in recently with in the district and showed their support for the teachers, administrators and staff in the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Let's see if cuts can be done without sacrificing the education of our kids.. Let's remember what we are here for, and that is them." (board member) Substantive discussion followed included: the need to call a special meeting to revise the list of proposed terminations to more equitably include all classifications of employees including administrative, the need to work with union and administration leadership to discuss possible program/employee reductions, the requirement to finalize a balanced budget although tax revenue will likely be reduced, the impact on the families of employee's

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Care	because it was bad or good for children.		<p>to be terminated, the need to create a recall list when the fiscal projections have been more clearly defined, and the need to be transparent in action while protecting the privacy rights of individuals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed reduction in force is only the first step in expenditure containment. He asked that the reductions be reconsidered to make a more equitable way to establish a balanced budget. • These last four weeks have been difficult for everyone involved. Both the board of education and I have witnessed firsthand a great passion for education from parents, students and community members. We eagerly look forward to working together as a community for the betterment of our students.
Critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I reminded her in a public meeting, you were the greatest proponent of this when it came about three years ago. And, you asked us what we can do about it. And, I said, here we are and had been working furtively about doing this and now it comes to you and you're changing your 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a board of education meeting a community member stated that she was disappointed that there was no opportunity for the public to review the proposed budget reductions prior to the board voting on the matter.

Ethical Lenses	Interview	Observation	Document Analysis
Critique	position. I, in essence, what I did I may have cut off my nose despite my face. But I publically challenged the resistance that I was getting from this one board member. This board member, because she was in a leadership role, she was trying to position the idea with other board members. And, I just brought her right back to the point and time about where we were.		

Chapter IV displayed data collected from the interview with the superintendent, observation of a board of education meeting, and document analysis of previous board of education meeting minutes and local newspaper articles. These data were then displayed in chart form as they relate to the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique. Chapter V will conclude the study with discussion of research questions, findings, limitations and conclusions. The discussions include implications for educational leadership in public high schools in Illinois, as well as, recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendents' leadership and decision-making. Specifically this study looked at what reductions, if any, were made in school districts by superintendents in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs and the reason behind their decision making. This dissertation analyzed these decisions through the conceptual framework of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique.

The study will answer the following research questions:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?
 - a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?

2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique in what lenses did the superintendents' ground their decision making?
4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

In this chapter, the researcher analyzes these data and makes conclusions based on these data presented in Chapter IV. The following methods were used to collect these data:

- 1) Individualized Interviews
- 2) Observation
- 3) Document analysis

The school superintendent from School District "A" and School District "B" participated in the Individualized Interviews with the researcher. Member checking was conducted to provide each interview participant an opportunity to review their statements for accuracy and approval. The researcher continued communication on multiple occasions with each superintendent following the interview for additional member checking. An observation of a board of education meeting was conducted in each school district. A journal was kept by the researcher to reflect on thoughts, ideas and themes that came to light as well as acknowledge any personal biases. Finally, documents were obtained and analyzed in an attempt to triangulate these data.

Findings are presented in the following sections:

- 1) Conclusions through the presentation of relevant literature and data from this study.
- 2) Recommendations for educational leaders based on this study.
- 3) Limitations.
- 4) Recommendations for future research.
- 5) Summary

Conclusions

Research Question 1

According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?

- a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
- b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
- c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?

Relevance of Research Data to Literature

The 2008 financial crisis proved to be detrimental to people nationwide creating increases in unemployment, steep drops in housing prices, and tight credit for even the most financially sound. The results of the recession have not only taken their toll on the country's economic output and unemployment rate, but they have also impacted our

nation's school districts (Hull, 2010). With local funding hit hard by the declining housing values, and the significant state budget shortfalls, school leaders were forced to reevaluate their spending (Ellerson, 2010). School districts found themselves in a constant struggle to balance their declining operating budgets and still conform to expectations of the state mandates which took both time and money and provided limited flexibility of where cuts can be made (Hull, 2010).

Especially during tough economic times, Carter and Cunningham (1997) believe superintendents must possess a wide range of knowledge and skill sets in order to make important financial decisions and effectively run their school district. Superintendents must be well grounded in financial management and be knowledgeable in matters pertaining to allocation of human, financial and material resources. They must be the forefront in the budgeting process and should not delegate this responsibility to the business manager or board of education (Townsend, Johnston, Gross, Lynch, Garcy, Roberts, & Novotney, 2007).

Additionally, superintendents are held to specific standards that they must address in their leadership and decision-making. The six superintendent standards include:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

- Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (“Educational Leadership Policy Standards: 2008”)

The ability of a superintendent or a school board to engage in community building and shared decision-making, to skillfully navigate a school district’s often-turbulent political waters, is meaningless unless such efforts improve student achievement. Therefore, superintendents must understand and be able to adapt to the highly political nature of the job. “Understanding linkages between communities and schools in a democratic society as well as the political dynamics between school board members and district chief executive officers is essential to effective leadership” (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 47). Superintendents work closely with elected officials, special interest groups, and board of education members who expect them to be responsive to public needs and demands, to make intelligent political decisions, to be good problem solvers, to be fiscally responsible, and to generate voter support for school bond issues (Blumberg, 1985).

To help navigate the political landscape of a school district, superintendents should develop and build strong relationships with their board of education members. A strong board and superintendent partnership is grounded in the “superintendents respect for the opinions of each individual board member and communicating with each one

regarding their interest and goals” (Townsend et al., 2007, p. 4). During times of important decision making within the district Townsend et al. suggests

Superintendents provide plans and recommendations based on data, research, and thoughtful processes. They need to work closely with their staff to develop quality information to assist the board. They also need to develop an effective timeline and process to reach a sound decision. The planning must include ways to communicate with all stakeholders to be impacted by the decision. (p. 35)

Relevance of Research Data

School District “A” essentially cut over 40 million dollars from their budget as a result of the 2008 financial recession. The data collected from the research from School District “A” portrays Superintendent “A” to have a clear understanding of the negative effects of the financial crisis on the school district. Superintendent “A” who mentioned in his interview that he learned his knowledge in finance throughout his administrative experience, relied heavily on his business manager during this time for financial decision-making. In the interview Superintendent “A” stated “to a large extent the business person at this point is the gatekeeper especially in light of the \$40 million we had to cut and the hundreds of jobs that people lost.” Although Superintendent “A” relied heavily on his business manager, it was evident that he was knowledgeable about the financial state of school district and what it was going to take to balance the budget.

Superintendent “A” considered a wide variety of factors prior to providing his final administrative recommendation for reductions to the board of education.

Superintendent “A” spoke of the importance of taking into consideration the values and interests of the board of education prior to embarking upon such an important decision-making process. In the interview, Superintendent “A” stated, “I like to have discussions

with the board with regard to parameters. I want to know what are their expectations for the depths of reduction, what are their values, what are the parameters, the fences that they are going to put around me so I know where they want me to be? For example, if they do not want me to touch extracurricular, tell me that so that I'm not bringing recommendations for extracurricular." Ultimately, the final decisions regarding reductions falls in the hands of the board of education, so it is important to consider their priorities before embarking on such an in depth process. The main goal of the board of education was portrayed in a news article early in the process. In this article, Superintendent "A" publicly mentioned the goal for the reductions. "Our primary objective will be to minimize the impact on our students. None of the projected reductions will be easy, but they must be made if we are to meet our goal of providing the best possible educational services to our students while also being good stewards of the community's resources" ("District "A" Starts Trimming Deficit by Cutting about \$2 M this Year," 2009).

Superintendent "A" approached this process in phases, beginning with reductions that did not directly impact students. Examples of early reductions decisions included limiting staff travel and conference expenses, reducing building budgets by 10%, reducing custodial substitutes, reducing production of district newsletter, reducing transportation budget for extracurricular travel, and reducing the technology and maintenance budget. The next phase included more drastic reductions in which Superintendent "A" considered multiple factors prior making his final decisions.

The data collected shows that Superintendent “A” valued the ideas and opinions of the school community constituents. Therefore collaboration was a key consideration Superintendent “A” used in the decision-making process during the 2008 financial recession. Superintendent “A” collaborated with administration, faculty and community members in hopes to understand and prioritize the potential reductions with in the school district. He held leadership conferences with his administrative team with the goal to prioritize and come to an agreement on the potential reductions for the school district.

During the administrative meetings he asked his administration team to compare School District “A” with other comparable unit districts in the state of Illinois. The data found during this process was also considered in Superintendent “A’s” decision making process. Although he valued the opinions of his school community, the superintendent also took the data founded from the comparable study into consideration, even if it proved to be unfavorable to certain people. In the interview, Superintendent “A” mentioned, “I said I am recommending you lose a dean and I am doing it because of these comparables and we can agree to disagree, but it is my job to make a recommendation.” Collaboration was extremely important, however Superintendent “A” had a clear understanding that ultimately the final recommendation for reductions to the board of education lay in the hands of the superintendent.

Navigating the political landscape was a key component of the decision making process for Superintendent “A.” Essentially, 40 million dollars in reductions affected a wide variety of people, and in the planning process it was important to consider this as a factor that would come to light when taking such a collaborative approach. One way

Superintendent “A” attempted to do this was by requiring a counter balance strategy for each reduction recommendation. A counter balance strategy required an explanation for the recommendation and how the district would be able to carry on after this reduction. In the interview, Superintendent “A” mentioned “Anytime you are going to make the recommendation to make a cut, you have to tell me how we are going counteract that, which was referred to as a counter balance strategy. So have a plan.” Having and stating a plan for each recommendation helped because of the political nature involved in his process.

After taking multiple factors into consideration for the decision making process, the final reductions recommended for board approval affected the areas of school personnel, curriculum, and extracurricular programs. Superintendent “A’s” collaborative approach to the process brought in multiple perspectives and beliefs on what was essential to maintain and what the district could survive without. Requiring the people involved in the process to develop a counterbalance strategy to explain why the cut was being recommended and how the district would continue to carry out its mission without this specific area, was one way Superintendent “A” identified potential bias present with certain stakeholders in the school district. This forced individuals to hear and see rationales from multiple perspectives from school community stakeholders.

School district “A” eliminated close to 345 full-time teaching, administrative and support staff positions. The districts Reading Recovery program, a proven effective instructional program in the lower grade levels, was eliminated along with a number of differentiation specialists that worked individually with gifted students. On the other

hand, the school district voted to maintain the restorative justice program at the high school level. Extracurricular programs such as band were eliminated at certain grade levels, the number of athletic and activity stipends were decreased and fees were increased for student participation. The district reduced the number of deans, department chairs, secretaries and many other important staff members throughout the district. Class sizes increased and the number of class offerings to students was decreased. These are just a few of the many specific cuts made in the areas of personnel, curriculum and extracurricular programs. Superintendent “A” considered multiple factors prior to his final recommendation to the board, however, the data suggests that reductions, no matter the area, were not made in isolation and each successive reduction was connected to effects of a prior decision. Overall, it was evident that Superintendent “A” was amidst challenging times within his district where his leadership and decision making was truly put to the test by the school community.

School District “B” cut approximately 2.1 million dollars from their budget as a result of the 2008 financial recession. The data collected from the research from School District “B” portrays Superintendent “B” to have somewhat of an unclear understanding of the negative effects of the financial crisis on the school district. Superintendent “B” mentioned in his interview that he learned his knowledge in school finance throughout out his graduate coursework and administrative experience, and that he relied heavily on his business manager during this time for financial decision-making referring to it as an “intimate relationship.” This reliance on the business manager was evident when asked about primary sources of school funding during the interview.

From the data collected, it was clear that Superintendent “B” took into consideration his board of education values when it came to decision making regarding reductions. The board of education expected that any reductions or cuts made be located outside of the classroom. During the interview with Superintendent “B” he explained that “we operate from the premise that if any reductions are going to take place they will take place outside of the classroom. So, that’s our priority. Our board has been very clear about that so, it’s always been administrative support and extraneous things that we have looked at cutting when that time has come.”

Prior to obtaining additional monies from the ARRA, adhering to these values did not deem to be realistic in nature. At this time the approach to the approved cuts were made by reduction in force based on district seniority. Luckily, the district received additional funding from the government that salvaged the positions that lie with in the classroom allowing the district to hold true to the board of education initial values.

Superintendent “B” took his current relationship with his Board of Education members into consideration during his decision making process. Superintendent “B” stated during the interview process that “my board of education has been a very supportive board. My staying here as long as I have is a credit to the relationship that I have with my board because I am the only employee that they have. If that relationship were to just disintegrate, either they could ask me to leave or I would say I am ready to leave.” Superintendent “B” had confidence in his board of education’s support when making his administrative recommendations for reductions for his district. Ultimately due to the political nature of these decisions and the position the board members were in

there was natural resistance. However, when all was said and done the final decisions were in fact aligned with their initial priority which was to stay away from reductions with in the classroom.

Using more of a top down approach of decision making rather than one that was collaborative in nature; Superintendent “B” strongly considered the recommendations for reductions from two of his most trusted district administrators. The Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Academic Officer had the responsibility to research possible options and provide a list of suggested reductions from the areas in which they were in charge of. Superintendent “B” had the ultimate power of making the final decisions but relied heavily on these two district administrators to put in the time and effort necessary to provide the best recommendations for reductions on what they felt were the most appropriate. The inability of Superintendent “B” to provide the specific positions during the time of the interview that were reduced or eliminated during the 2008 financial recession provides evidence of his lack of direct involvement in the implementation of this process.

Superintendent “B” took into consideration the political effects his decisions could have had with the board of education; however he did not let this define the end result. In his interview, Superintendent “B” stated “it’s what we’re doing for the children whom we serve. It is not about the adults who like the idea or do not like the idea. If we are doing it for the right reason, it is going to come out in the wash that what we are doing is either bad or good because it was bad or good for children.” This vantage point regarding decision making is made allowable because of his strong, trusting relationship

with the board of education. He can make a decision in which may be political nature, but is confident enough in his board's support that the end result will be a decision ultimately grounded in what is best for children.

After taking multiple factors into consideration for the decision making process, the final reductions recommended for board approval prior to receiving the ARRA monies from the government, affected the areas of school personnel, curriculum, and extracurricular programs. Upon receiving the financial support from the government, the decision was made to reinstate all of the previously eliminated teaching positions that were chosen initially for elimination by means of Reduction in Force. The data suggests that the superintendent believed that if the district were able to make the necessary reductions to balance the budget by avoiding reductions in teaching staff, he believed that would adequately maintain his focus on student achievement. However, the data suggests that reductions, no matter the area, were not made in isolation and each successive reduction could be connected to effects of a prior decision, and would result in a negative impact on student achievement.

Many times during the interview, Superintendent "B" indicated that he was happy with the results of his final decision making because he was able to stay clear of the classroom. Superintendent "B" shifted his focus on administrative reductions. In the interview, when Superintendent "B" was asked about the final reductions made, he was unable to provide specific and detailed information. He explained that ultimately, the district eliminated a total of 41 positions that were all administrative in nature. Reductions he could recall included an Assistant Athletic Director, Public Relations

Officer, Special Education administrators, administrative positions in the business office responsible for payroll, front desk receptionists, switch board operators, and technology administrators. However, additional actions to reduce the school budget evidenced in the document analysis included the elimination of low enrollment classes, the reorganization of the school librarians, elimination of special education support staff, an increase of registration fees for grades K-12 and the elimination of B level sports including freshman and junior varsity programs. Throughout the process of data collection, it was evident that Superintendent “B” was amidst challenging times within his district where his leadership and decision making was truly under the microscope by the school community.

Overall, multiple considerations were evidenced by both superintendents’ decision making regarding reductions within their school district. The considerations seemed to align with what each superintendent valued or deemed as important and was ultimately what guided the resulted reductions within each school district.

Superintendent “A,” grounded his decision-making in what he knew at the time were the board of education’s values and parameters and considered the school communities’ values and opinions by collaborating with them in the process to decide what and where the reductions would take place. He acknowledged the political aspect in the process by requiring those involved to provide a counterbalance strategy. He understood that the ultimate decisions lay with him and used data derived from comparable research to override a recommendation by his fellow school constituents. Superintendent “B” also was well informed of his board’s values and goals and considered the recommendations

from his two most trusted district administrators. He understood the possible political ramifications of his decisions but was confident enough in support from the board of education that the end result would work itself out to be what was best for students. The considerations that both superintendent “A” and “B” incorporated in their decision-making, with particular attention to not negatively affecting student outcomes, were ultimately what led to a balanced budget within each of their school districts.

Research Question 2

How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?

Relevance of Data Research to Literature

Superintendents are the financial leaders within their district, and therefore it is imperative that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to make effective decisions regarding the management of their districts’ financial resources (“Educational Leadership Policy Standards: 2008”). According to Hoyle et al. (2005), “it is essential for the success of superintendents that they exhibit a clear understanding of the different aspects of school finance including data management, budget creation, budget management, legal aspects of managing resources, and problem solving” (p. 96). The ability to accurately predict the revenue available to the district and the cost data regarding all program elements in the district will help maintain efficient operations of schools (Hoyle et al., 2005).

This financial knowledge and skill of a superintendent is often times acquired through a combination of graduate coursework and through on the job experience.

Reflecting on past experiences allow leaders to grow and learn from past and previous decisions. “Experience leads to observation, reflection about that experience, and ultimately the development of new insights or conclusions which shape different action in the future” (Roberts, 2008, p. 117). Senge (1990) placed the process of reflection as integral to organizational learning. Huber (2002) suggests that educational leaders need to look inward to clarify personal values as well as outward to understand how they connect to a larger whole. Roberts (2008), states

As leaders are faced with an environment that grows increasingly complex, multicultural, and ambiguous, we are seeing an increasing focus on the value of reflective capacity as a means for meeting the challenge. Leadership is learning – at both the individual and group levels. The ability to reflect, however, is not necessarily an inherent attribute, but it must be cultivated over time. (p. 125)

When fiscal responsibility is a key element in the role and responsibility of a superintendent, it is essential that reflection be a part of the daily activity.

In addition to the importance of reflective practice on past experiences, equally important for effective leadership is to have a clear vision of which direction you want your district to go in. Stephen Covey (2004) believes that effective leaders should begin with the end in mind. “To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you are going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction” (p. 98).

A leader’s vision is often grounded in their values and beliefs on what they feel are important and the best path for their school district to take. Sergiovanni’s (1992) theory of moral leadership recognizes the moral aspect of decision making and identifies

the importance of incorporating one's personal vision into the decision making process. Sergiovanni believes that "reflection, combined with personal vision and an internal system of values, becomes the basis of leadership strategies and actions" (p. 7).

Since the school board of education plays a key role in the final decision making process for the district their relationship with the superintendent must be grounded in the establishment of core values, mission and vision statements (Townsend et al., 2007). During tough financial times for the district, it is the responsibility of the superintendent to maintain focus on the goals and mission of the district. "The budget is a planning tool, a decision-making tool, and should reflect the boards priorities" (Townsend et al., 2007, p. 53). During times of budget reductions the superintendent should be the districts key communicator and approach the process with the district vision and mission in mind (Hoyle et al., 2005).

Relevance of Research Data

The declining economy had a tremendous impact on School District "A." The effects were so great that School District "A" was forced to make a wide variety of cuts all across the board in areas such as personnel, curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. Between the years of 2009-2012, School District "A" cut over 40 million dollars in operating expenses. The decisions made regarding the reductions within the district did not come easily, and upon reflection, Superintendent "A" indicated that he would approach some decisions differently in the future. However, it should be noted that in the 2013-2014, School District "A" was able to finally begin their year with a balanced budget and they have continued to do so for two years in a row.

The main priority and focus of Superintendent “A” and the board of education was to eliminate the deficit in its entirety. In order to do this, challenging decisions had to be made. Data from the interview showed that Superintendent “A” had a strong belief in their district’s five year strategic plan which was created by various stakeholders in the community. About 275 taxpayers, parents, staff members, community leaders and students came together over four days to create the five year strategic plan for the school district (School District “A” website). It was collaborative in nature and it is a reflection of the true vision of the school district. The impact a decision had on the strategic plan was used by Superintendent “A” to assess the success of his decisions.

Additionally, Superintendent “A” focused and assessed the results of his decision making on how it impacted the individual student. In an article from a local newspaper, Superintendent “A” was quoted saying “our goal was to find ways to save money and generate new revenues while minimizing the impact on our students and classrooms. Everything we do affects students in some way, but this plan honors the real reason why we all come to work every day, to help our children learn and become intelligent, successful members of society” (Chicago Tribune, 2010, p. 1). In the initial stages of reductions, cuts were made outside the classroom. Once deeper reductions needed to be made, Superintendent “A” created an environment within his administration that fostered deep and critical thinking, requiring his trusted administrators to play a key role in developing the best plan to reduce the deficit. If a suggestion was made, Superintendent “A” required an explanation for the recommendation as well as a counter balance strategy.

Having been in administration for 25 years, Superintendent “A” has a vast amount of experiences in which crucial decisions were made for his district. Just as Roberts (2008) suggests that reflection on one’s experience leads to the development of new insights or conclusions which shape different action in the future, Superintendent “A” learned from the results of his past decisions and indicated that he will use what he learned to help shape his future decisions as a school leader. When assessing the outcomes of past decisions, there are aspects in which he said he would keep the same and others that he would change. Grounded in his strong value in the district’s strategic plan, Superintendent “A” believes in and would maintain his collaborative approach to decision making. He understands and respects the stakeholders in the community no matter what the consequences entail.

Of great importance, after assessing the results and reflecting on previous decisions, one change Superintendent “A” would make would be to better navigate the political landscape of the school district. However, data collected from the interview and through the board of education meeting minutes revealed political issues associated not only with the board of education, but also from teachers, administrators, and community members involved in the process. Superintendent “A” stated in his interview that upon reflecting on his experience and the unintended consequences that arose from his experience, he would “bring less naiveté” to the decision-making process. There proved to be political motive not only from the board of education but from the administrators whom he was working with to help in the final decision making process.

The impacts of the suppressed economy also challenged Superintendent “B” to make tough financial decisions for his district. Beginning in 2009, School District “B” began the process of reducing their budget and cut over 2.1 million dollars from the budget. The decisions made regarding the reductions did not come easily but through the process of reflection, Superintendent “B” was confident that the approach he took and the decisions made would be repeated in the future and were the correct ones for his school district.

The main priority and focus of Superintendent “B” was on student achievement. He assessed his decisions made on the impact they would have on student achievement. In the interview, Superintendent “B” responded that his “top priority is student achievement and to make certain that the services that we are providing are mirroring themselves in our students being successful in whatever it takes so they are successful when they leave us.” The shared goal between the board of education and the Superintendent when approaching this challenging situation was to focus on reductions that lay outside the classroom because together they believed this was the route that would have the least impact on students.

However, data suggests that the strong belief in improving student achievement may be considered questionable by many stakeholders with in District “B.” The recommendations for reductions were provided to the board from the superintendent without the input and suggestions of staff and community members. Superintendent “B” relied on his two trusted administrators to research and to provide their suggestions on what decisions would have the least impact on student achievement. Superintendent “B”

presented these suggestions to the board of education for approval. Data from a board of education meeting on March 28, 2010, portray the staff and community member's anger towards their lack of involvement in the process. A community member signed up for public comment at a board meeting expressing her concern that the proposed budget reduction plan was being presented to the public at the same time the board was being asked to approve it. She felt the process did not provide the community with an opportunity to ask questions before a board vote was taken. Additionally, a staff member from School District "B" expressed her concern and questioned how the proposed cuts to staff and teachers were going to affect students, health services, and the community in general. At the same board meeting during the agenda item of "board comments" a board of education member stated that "a collaborative effort was needed to ensure that the last cuts to be made involving staffing, and that the boards main priority is the students" (School District "B" Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 2010).

Superintendent "B's" actual approach to decision making during this time conflicts with a metric of success Superintendent "B" identified during the interview. Superintendent "B" stated that the "lack of disagreement amongst various constituents" was taken into account when assessing his decisions. However, his decision to limit the involvement of various stakeholders within the district left many people angry and in disagreement of the proposals being made. Additionally, according to the March 18, 2010 board of education meeting minutes, Superintendent "B" explained the administration's attempt to work with the union regarding the plan for budget reductions because proposed items such as salary freezes and increasing class sizes have to be

bargained with unions. However this was not possible because only one representative from the union responded and was willing to work with the district on the process. One wonders if this actual lack of stakeholder input led to the recent extended, contentious teachers' strike on District "B."

Superintendent "B" has been in educational administration for 25 years and has had to make a number of challenging financial decisions throughout his career. The decisions he made during the 2008 financial recession affected many people within the school community. When Superintendent "B" was asked to reflect on his decisions in the interview, he was confident that the process and decisions made were the correct ones because of his trust in his Chief Academic Officer and Chief Financial Officer. In the interview, Superintendent "B" stated "the structure that we had the time that happened, it was the superintendent and reporting directly to the superintendent was the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief Financial Officer. Because they were closer to the people where the cuts were coming from, I relied heavily on their ability to analyze the circumstances of the situation, the fiscal impact, and the programmatic impacts and to make those recommendations to me. I allowed them to do that and I received their recommendations and I acted upon their recommendations." The Government financial support from the ARRA monies assisted the district with saving valuable positions that were located within the classroom, which in the end aligned to the combined board and superintendent's belief and value in student achievement. In the interview, Superintendent "B" felt that community stakeholders including the board of education were happy because they were able to salvage these previously eliminated positions and

reduce areas that lay outside the classroom in the form of administrative positions.

However, previous board of education minutes detail a board member expressing his feelings that he saw no sense of urgency by the board or administration and he felt that there has been no discussion on a method to recoup savings after the elimination of administrative positions (Board of Education Meeting Minutes, June, 2010).

Each superintendent identified their metric of success which they used to assess their decision making. This metric of success is tied directly to their beliefs and values of what their top priorities are when making a decision. These beliefs guided each superintendent's approach to the decision making process and provided the foundation for the assessment of results in the reflection process. With an understanding of the board of education's priorities, Superintendent "A" strongly believed in the district's strategic plan that was collaboratively created to increase student achievement. He believed in his approach to the decision making process; but in hindsight he would be more cognizant of the political nature of such a high profile situation with so many people invested. Superintendent "B" also had an understanding of his board of education's priorities and his strongly held belief in the importance of student achievement. Superintendent "B" saw his role in this process in a more global viewpoint where his responsibility was to build the capacity of people beyond their understanding of what they see and what they perceive is happening. He provided his final recommendations for reductions based on the information he received from his chiefs and without the input from his other school community stakeholders. He believed his approach to the process and final decisions

made were the ‘right’ decisions and believed that the end result left his school community happy and content.

Research Question 3

According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique in what lenses did the superintendents’ ground their decision making?

Relevance of Data Research to Literature

The study of applied ethics in educational administration is an effort to assist school leaders in making moral and ethical decisions about increasingly complex sets of problems and situations that arise on a daily basis (Beckner, 2003). Ethical principles help guide decision making and action and has been a part of school administration since the beginning days of the profession (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). The American Association of School Administration (AASA) has a statement of Ethics for Educational Leaders which outlines what one should consider when making a decision for the school community. Wagner and Simpson, (2009) suggest that a professional code of ethics creates a sense of moral vision for members of a profession. It sets high standards for how a school leader’s professional behavior should be conducted and “by adapting and committing to this code of ethics, an educational leader acknowledges that he is a servant of the school community by acting in a way that provides equal education opportunities for all students” (“Code of Ethics,” 2007). In addition to having a professional code of ethics, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), suggest leaders should also take the time to develop their own personal code of ethics based on personal experiences and their values of the best interest of the student.

In educational leadership, it is believed that there is a moral imperative for the profession to serve the best interests of the students. Therefore it is important that this ideal serves as the foundation for educational leaders when faced with ethical dilemmas (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). When faced with challenging situations, the focus is reflected in most personal and professional codes of ethics. Specifically, during the time of the 2008 financial recession, school leaders were faced with the ethical dilemma of how to effectively run their school district with limited financial resources. There are no specific directives that can be looked up in a textbook to assist a school leader on how to solve an issue and when an issue arises the school leader is still called upon and expected to get things right when addressing such dilemmas (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). There are however, ethical lenses or theories that have been developed over time to help provide the foundation for solving such dilemmas. These ethical lenses include: utilitarianism, deontology, the ethic of care, and the ethic of critique.

The ethical lens of utilitarianism looks at decision making based on what is best for the greatest amount of people (Mill, 2007). Jeremy Bentham and John Stewart Mill, well known utilitarian's cited in literature, believe that "the best interests of children are served if the negative consequences are minimized and positive benefits are maximized for the greatest number of children in one's care" (Walker, 2013, p. 49). The utilitarian lens can also be viewed as the ethic of probability because what is in the interest of children may also be understood through a calculation of the probable positive or negative consequences, both short and long term for society as a whole (Walker, 2013). It is understood through the utilitarian lens that sometimes a few must suffer for the

benefit of the many, but the ultimate goal is to maximize pleasure and minimize displeasure (Wagner & Simpson, 2009).

The deontological lens looks to establish the rightness of the action by determining if the decision could be universally applied to all (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). The deontological perspective defines a decision that is “for the best interests of children” by a set of rules, duties or principles. The focus of these decisions would be on an educator’s conformity to these ethical principles or a set of rules (Walker, 2003). Walker believes it is the duty of educational leaders to “act in a way that children are never treated as means to ends but, rather, always as ends in themselves” (p. 47). Unlike utilitarianism, leaders will act in a way not because it favors the majority but because they have an unconditional obligation to follow the moral law. “Having a moral law is open to understanding by everyone able and willing to reason while keeping in mind that there is nothing more valuable in the moral world than the well-being of other autonomous agents” (Wagner & Simpson, 2009, p. 30). Regardless of any consequences that may follow an action, people will do what is right according to moral code, laws, and/or regulations.

The ethic of care, supported by Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, is grounded in the central ethical question: what does the “one cared for” require from us? As Gilligan (1977) sees it, “the moral agent must take into account the context of the moral dilemma and the specific relationships involved, grapple with the inherent ambiguities, and attempt to harm no one and care for all through the decision taken” (p. 34). Decisions grounded in the ethic of care place students and the relationships surrounding students, at

the center of the educational process (Noddings, 1992). Leaders who value the ethic of care listen to others when making important moral decisions (Barth, 1990). This lens asks school leaders to “consider the consequences of their decisions and actions by asking questions such as: who will benefit from what I decide? Who will be hurt by my actions? What are the long term effects of a decision I make today? And if I am helped by someone now, what should I do in the future about giving back to this individual or to society in general?” (Shapiro, 2010, p. 12).

Lastly, the ethic of critique, supported by scholars Joan Shapiro and Jackie Stefkovich (2011) does not accept the ethics of those in power and looks to challenge the status quo by asking the difficult questions that shed light on social inequities. The ethic of critique is based on critical theory and according to Foster (1986), “Critical theorists are scholars who have approached social analysis in an investigative and critical manner” (p. 71). The focus and concern is placed on making known the voices of the unheard (Giroux, 1988, 2003; Weis & Fine, 1993). This approach to ethical dilemmas asks educational leaders to “go beyond questioning and critical analysis to examine and grapple with those possibilities that could enable all children, whatever their social class, race or gender, to have opportunities to grow, learn, and achieve” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 15).

Relevance of Research Data

The ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique are established ethical theories that help provide a solid foundation for educational leaders to help ground their decision making when approached with ethical dilemmas. The 2008

financial recession provided challenging times for both Superintendent “A” and “B,” where they were forced to make tough financial decisions for their school district.

Although both superintendents were faced with the same problem, each approached the process and grounded their final decision-making using different ethical lenses.

Based on the data collected in the research study, Superintendent “A” primarily grounded his decision making in the ethic of care. With the students at the center of the educational process, the ethic of care encourages collaborative efforts between faculty, staff, and students, to promote interpersonal interactions, to deemphasize competition and to facilitate the sense of belonging (Beck, 1994; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

Superintendent “A” approached his final decision making in a collaborative nature to ensure he heard from all of his school community stakeholders. He valued the importance of listening to and providing others with the chance to voice their opinions in order to formulate the best decisions for their district. Superintendent “A” collaborated with his board of education and his trusted administrators through organized, discussion based workshops where they worked together to formulate ideas for recommended reductions. He held a multitude of community forums, provided opportunities for feedback online, and he spoke directly with faculty and staff regarding the reduction process.

Just as Noddings (1988) believed the focus should be on maintaining bonds of shared commitment between stakeholders even if it doesn’t promote the greatest net pleasure, Superintendent “A” valued the importance of involving all school community stakeholders in the process knowing that this process would not leave everyone happy in

the end. Superintendent “A” took steps to help ensure that each recommended cut was well thought out before final decisions were made. Superintendent “A” explained the importance of having a plan behind each reduction because of the often political nature that is encompassed with in a school community. The document analysis provided evidence of Superintendent “A’s” required counterbalance strategy which provided a rationale for each recommended cut and an explanation of how the district will move forward without it.

The ethic of care asks leaders to consider questions such as “Who will benefit from what I decide? Who will be hurt by my actions? What are the long term effects of a decision I make today?” (Shaperio & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 18). When Superintendent “A” provided the final administrative recommendations for reductions to the board of education, due to the collaborative nature of the process, Superintendent “A” was confidently able to answer these questions embedded in the theory of the ethic of care. In the interview with Superintendent “A” when asked reflect on the way he approached the decision making process he stated “If I had to do it again I would not change the collaborative nature of it, whether it is the community, administrative, or teacher input, I would not change that.” The final decisions recommended to the board of education were grounded in what was best for the students based on the data gathered from the research conducted and the feedback from the school community stakeholders.

Also present with in the decision making of Superintendent “A” was the ethic of critique. The collaborative process created by Superintendent “A,” provided the opportunity for all stakeholders to voice their opinions and be heard. The ethic of

critique asks educators to identify the silenced voices and challenges them to find a way for those voices to be heard (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Data collected from the interview and document analysis identify that there were a wide variety of opportunities for all students, faculty, parents, administrators, and the school community members to voice their opinions. Superintendent “A” explained in his interview, “we held community forums with the board and although I did not enjoy getting yelled at, I wouldn’t do it differently because it needed to be done and I would rather give people the chance to do that and feel they were heard.” It was evident that this was a valued and an important step in the process for Superintendent “A.”

Additionally, the ethic of critique challenges the status quo by addressing inconsistencies, formulating the hard questions, and challenging issues that arise (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Early on in the process, Superintendent “A” described his board of education as ‘dysfunctional’ and recognized the need for a change in their organizational structure due to the lack of trust amongst members. Superintendent “A” knew that his recommendation would be going against a long standing tradition within the board of education’s history. However, he felt strongly that the change would only help move them forward in the right direction. Although the board acknowledged that the current structure was not working, they denied his request because the current structure had worked so well in the past.

By challenging the status quo and bringing light to issues that may very well be left in the shadow, the ethic of critique awakens unstated values and helps recognize the frequency in which these morals have been modified or corrupted over time (Shapiro &

Stefkovich, 2011). Through the interview and document analysis, it was evident that Superintendent “A” recognized many political motives that arose from this collaborative decision making process he organized. Superintendent “A” stated “the commitment to every child anchors everything we do today, and steadies us against whatever may come tomorrow” (Community Patch, 2012). He valued making decisions grounded in what was best for the students. When political motives from school stakeholders emerged, he took the necessary measures to challenge personal biases in order to maintain focus on decisions that were best for the students. For example, when the administrators from the high school level were being less than forthcoming during the brainstorming process, Superintendent “A” placed them in an environment where their true opinions and thoughts would emerge for discussion. Additionally, Superintendent “A” recognized the board of education’s predisposition towards high school and voiced his concern regarding their final decision to cut primary Reading Recovery and maintain the high school Restorative Justice Program.

Based on the data collected in the research study, Superintendent “B” grounded his decision making using the utilitarian ethical lens. Utilitarian scholars such as Bentham and Mills believe decision making should be approached in a way that maximizes pleasure and minimizes displeasure. They believe that what is good for one is good for all (Mill, 2007). Superintendent “B’s” top priority was student achievement and when approaching the challenges of reducing costs during the time of the 2008 financial recession, he was in agreement with his board of education that any reductions to be made were to be located outside the classroom. He relied on the assistance of his

Chief Academic Officer and Chief Financial Officer to research and weighs the associated consequences to formulate a plan for potential reductions. Eventually, a final reduction plan based on what Superintendent “B” felt was the best for the majority of students in his district was brought to the board of education and recommended for approval.

Utilitarian’s acknowledge when making a decision based on the greater good, that sometimes a few must suffer for the benefit of the many (Mill, 2007). In the interview, Superintendent “B” stated that “even though there may be conflict associated with the decisions being made, if we are able to make certain that it serves our children and our children well that is my metric of success.” Additionally, he mentioned that as the superintendent, his role is to see the “global picture” when approaching the decision making process and he understood that the final decisions may not be favorable to some. Disgruntled community members voiced their opinions regarding the decision making process at the board meetings. Specifically at a meeting on March 18, 2010, a community member stated that she was disappointed that there was no opportunity for the public to review the proposed budget reductions prior to the board voting on the matter (School District “B” Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 2010). Regardless, of the potential backlash from the lack of involvement of the school community, Superintendent “B” was confident in his board of education’s support and presented his plan for approval because it is what he believed was best for all students.

Within previous board of education meeting minutes, it was noted that Superintendent “B” reached out to union representatives to review reduction ideas that

could only be decided at the collective bargaining table. However, it was evident in the board of education meeting minutes that there was turmoil between administration and the union during that time. At a board meeting in March of 2010, Superintendent “B” stated “the district has worked tirelessly, and has engaged the leadership of every union, to find solutions to the budget crisis. Unfortunately, communications with union leadership have recently come to a halt” (School District “B” Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 2010).

Recently, during the 2014-2015 school year, School District “B” was involved in a protracted, heated teacher’s strike that affected the district’s 17,000 students. The strike was based upon the teachers union’s request for a substantial increase in pay, health care benefits, and working conditions (Chicago Tribune, 2014). After a four week battle of negotiations the union and administration agreed upon a contract and the 17,000 students were able to return to school. Superintendent “B” was quoted in the newspaper stating, “These last four weeks have been difficult for everyone involved. Both the board of education and I have witnessed firsthand a great passion for education from parents, students and community members. We eagerly look forward to working together as a community for the betterment of our students” (Chicago Tribune, 2014). While the recent teacher strike was undoubtedly a different type of challenge than that of the 2008 financial recession, it is interesting to ponder how Superintendent “B” framed his approach to decision making and if he reflected on his previous challenges as guidance.

Both superintendents grounded their decision making using different ethical lens and approached the challenges of the 2008 financial recession in different ways.

Superintendent “A” grounded his decision making in both the ethical lenses of care and critique. He collaboratively approached the reduction process, valuing the thoughts and opinions of all school community stakeholders and ensured the opportunity for all voices to be heard. When issues emerged he stood up for what he believed in and challenged the status quo. He was not afraid to ask the tough questions to help ensure the final decisions were in fact what were best for the students and not catering towards individual personal agendas. Superintendent “B” grounded his decision making in the utilitarian lens. He worked with his Chief Financial and Chief Academic Officer to decide what reductions should be made for their district. Superintendent “B” reached out to union leadership to discuss options to reduce costs but was unable to gain their cooperation in the process. Superintendent “B” understood that his decisions would have consequences and may not be favorable to some, but believed that in the end if his decisions were truly what was best for all students, then they were the ‘right’ decisions to be made.

The charts below identify the number of times each ethical lens was present during the research study in the interview, observation and document analysis.

Table 10

Number of Times Ethical Lens were Present during Research Study

Interview	Utilitarianism	Deontology	Ethic of Care	Ethic of Critique
District “A”	4	1	7	6
District “B”	9	0	3	1

Observation	Utilitarianism	Deontology	Ethic of Care	Ethic of Critique
District “A”	1	5	2	0
District “B”	2	2	1	0

Documents	Utilitarianism	Deontology	Ethic of Care	Ethic of Critique
District “A”	7	3	9	4
District “B”	10	2	4	1

Research Question 4

What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

Based on the current literature and this research study, educational leaders who are faced with the challenge of running a school district with decreasing and limited financial resources should consider the following recommendations. Such recommendations originated from data gathered through this research’s, individualized interviews, observation, and document analysis.

1. Establish and maintain a good relationship with the board of education, while having a clear understanding of their goals and values.

Townsend et al. (2007) believes that whether the person is a new or seasoned veteran, an effective superintendent should understand that building solid board relationships should take precedence. Superintendent “A” did not have a trusting relationship with his board of education during the time of the 2008 financial recession

and felt the negative effects of the lack of board support during the final decision making process for the district. Additionally, as Superintendent “A” is retiring at the succession of this year, his main focus is on the associate superintendent’s transition into the superintendent position. One of the main points he has stressed to his succeeding superintendent, is the importance of maintaining trusting relationship with his board. Superintendent “A” stated in his interview, “I have advised the associate superintendent that he is the board of education’s choice and that’s important. They chose him and he needs to maintain that relationship.” Superintendent “B” on the other hand was confident in his board of education’s support, and had a clear understanding of their goal, which made the approval of his final administrative reduction plan a much smoother process.

2. Be cognizant of the political dynamics present within a school community.

Hoyle et al. (2005) believe that it is essential to understand the linkages between communities and schools in a democratic society as well as the political dynamics between school board members. There is a demand for superintendents to have political leadership skills which will ultimately help build consensus amongst school constituents and improve superintendent-board working relationships (Bjork & Lindle, 2001; Keedy & Bjork, 2003). Through his collaborative decisions- making process Superintendent “A” discovered the evolution of a wide variety of political dynamics amongst the school community. When he recognized recommendations for reductions based on personal biases, he took the necessary steps to maintain focus on the students. Within his reflection process, Superintendent “A” identified his ‘naiveté’ towards the school board’s bias towards the high school level as well as the pressures the board members were

under. The combination of the political dynamics and lack of board support for the superintendent resulted in a turbulent final decision making process at the board level (Gross & Shapiro, 2008).

Superintendent “B’s” approach to the decision making process minimized the opportunity for the district’s political dynamics to emerge until much later. When the final reduction plan was brought to the attention of the board of education for approval, school community members voiced their concern for their lack of involvement in the process. Additionally, due to the lack of participation from the teachers’ union, the board of education members were asked to consider reductions that were not affected by contractual obligations or subject to negotiations. One wonders if this type of decision making process played a role in the current strike between teachers and administration in School District “B.”

3. Identify your core values and beliefs as an educator because they will be the foundation of your leadership and will help ground your decision making when challenged with ethical dilemmas.

Sergiovanni (1992) believes “values play an important part in constructing an administrator’s mindscape and in determining leadership practice” (p. 9). His head, heart, and hand theory of leadership believes a leader’s values and beliefs help shape their mindscape of how the world works which then ultimately drives their decisions and actions as a leader. “The head of leadership is shaped by the heart and drives the hand” (p. 7).

Superintendent “A” knew that the reduction process would be extremely challenging. He approached this process in a collaborative way because he valued the input of his school community. He believed in making decisions based on what was best for students. Through research and collaboration, together the school community helped decide what direction the district should take. He was not afraid to challenge issues that arose which he felt diverted away from the ultimate goal. Superintendent “A” held strong to his values and beliefs when working with the board of education on the administrations’ final recommendations for reductions. Although the political dynamics encompassed within the school community overpowered and prevailed at times during the final decision making with the board of education, Superintendent “A” led the process with dignity and integrity with the students’ best interest at heart.

Superintendent “B” was decisive and confident in his decision making. He valued making decisions based upon what he believed was best for the students. He valued the importance of having a good working relationship with his board of education and an understanding of their vision for the district. He believed that reductions made outside of the classroom had the least impact on students and used this as the focus for decision making. Additionally, Superintendent “B” understood his decisions would have associated consequences but held strong to his belief that he has “a responsibility to build the capacity of people beyond their understanding of what they see and what they perceive is happening. Even though there may be conflict associated with the decisions being made, it is important we are able to make certain that the decisions serve our

children well.” One wonders if this type of philosophy towards decision making played a role in recent strike within District “B.”

Limitations

This research study is subject to a number of limitations imposed by the research design and time constraints. These limitations include:

1. The sample of respondents does not truly represent all superintendents in the state of Illinois. By limiting the participant sample, due to time and means constraints, only superintendents working in unit school districts are represented in this study.
2. The opportunity to obtain additional superintendents to participate in the study was limited because there are few Illinois superintendents in unit school districts who fit into the research study’s criteria. There were a limited number of unit school districts who relied heavily on general state aid with superintendents whose tenure began prior to the 2008 financial recession.
3. Both Superintendent “A” and “B” stated that they relied heavily on their Business Managers during the decision making process. Interviewing the Business Manager in addition to the superintendent in each district may have provided more information regarding the financial aspect behind the specific reductions made within the district.
4. The researcher’s own personal biases could be seen as a limitation to this study. However, a research journal was kept in an attempt to assist the researcher in her bias control and recognition. The paper notebook journal

included dates and times of relevant research events as well as field notes and self-reflections.

While there were potential limitations to this study, a major strength is the depth in which the researcher went into this study. This study involved two unit school districts in which interviews, and observation and document analysis was completed. With this manageable sample size, the researcher was allowed to dive deeply into each unit school district to identify the effects of the 2008 financial recession had on superintendent leadership and decision making.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following are suggestions for further research based on these data from this qualitative research study.

1. The state of Illinois is unique in the type of school districts available for students. This research was conducted within two large unit school districts which encompassed students in Pre-K through 12th grade levels. Research that expands this design to include public high school or elementary districts would be a welcome addition.
2. While this study focused on the effects of superintendent's leadership and decision-making, the data indicated that each superintendent leaned heavily on their business manager for financial support and guidance during the process. Interviewing the business manager as well as the superintendent within the school district, may provide for additional supporting information allowing for

a more rich and thick description of the events that occurred during the 2008 financial recession.

3. The total amount of money varied between school districts. School district “A” eliminated close to 40 million dollars while School district “B” eliminated close to 2.1 million. The proportionality of reductions differed between District “A” and District “B”. Additional research focusing on two districts with similar financial situations would contribute to the professional knowledge base of superintendents’ leadership. Their decisions and outcomes may provide more comparable information.
4. An ethical lens that was not used in the data analysis is the ethic of profession. Scholars believe there has been a gap in the literature using the paradigm of professional ethics to help solve moral dilemmas (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Shapiro and Stefkovich believe that what other ethics tend to ignore and what the ethic of profession focuses on which is “the consideration of those moral aspects unique to the profession and the questions that arise as educational leaders become more aware of their own personal and professional codes of ethics” (p. 19). The ethic of profession places emphasis on serving ‘the best interest of the students.’ Since literature does not define ‘the best interests of students’ (Stefkovich, 2006; Stefkovich, O’Brien, & Moore, 2002), Stefkovich (2006) conceptualizes educational decisions related to a student’s best interest “as incorporating individual rights, accepting and teaching students to accept responsibility for their actions, and respecting

students. These three Rs-rights, responsibility, and respect- are key to making ethical decisions that are in a student's best interests and, in turn, to fulfilling one's professional obligations as educational leaders" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p. 27). The addition of the ethical lens of profession into the analysis of the superintendent's decision making would provide another valuable paradigm in which superintendent decision making could be understood. Since the Ethic of Profession drives a leader to reflect on both personal and professional code of ethics, it would add valued information to research regarding superintendent decision making.

Final Thoughts

This research study explored the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendents' leadership and decision-making. Specifically this study looked at what reductions, if any, were made in school districts by superintendents in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs and the reason behind their decision making. This dissertation analyzed these decisions through the conceptual framework of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique.

The central research questions of this study are:

1. According to superintendents whose tenure included years 2007 to the present day, what considerations did they bring into their decision making regarding reductions within their school district?

- a. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school curriculum?
 - b. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - c. What considerations did superintendents bring into their decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?
2. How did the superintendents assess the results of their decisions from the time frame of 2007 to the present day?
 3. According to the interpretive framework of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique in what lenses did the superintendents' ground their decision making?
 4. What are the implications to the field of educational leadership?

This case study focused on two K-12 unit school districts located in tax capped district in the state of Illinois, who receive between 22-37% of general state aid funding from the state of Illinois and are led by a school superintendent that has been employed within the unit district of study since 2007. The subsequent data collected from the superintendents' interviews, observation of a board of education meeting, and through document analysis was triangulated and analyzed through the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care and critique. All of this information was integrated to answer the study's research questions.

This research highlighted how the 2008 financial recession created an ethical dilemma for both superintendents as they worked to lead and manage their school district

with limited financial resources. This study concluded that when superintendents approached a situation with this level of importance, they need to have a true understanding of their boards' values and beliefs prior to embarking on the decision making journey because the board is the school districts ultimate governing body. Additionally superintendents must establish and maintain a solid working relationship with the board of education. Without the support and trust of the board members a superintendent becomes a leader only by title, resigned to follow the decisions of the board and ultimately losing the ability to influence the final decision making process.

School board elections may bring about new challenges for superintendents. "The introduction of new board members changes the composition and culture of the governance team. Whether board members are elected or appointed, the astute superintendent carefully analyzes the constituent groups represented by each board member to expand his understanding of how to further build the relationships (Townsend et al., 2007, p. 1). Superintendent "A" stressed the importance of this concept to the transitioning superintendent in School District "A." In the interview, Superintendent "A" stated, "unlike my first eight years or so as superintendent I had a very strong collaborative relationship with the board and I don't now. I would and have advised the associate superintendent that he is their choice and that's important. They chose him and he needs to maintain that relationship." Superintendent "A's" lack of board support provided hurdles and challenges during the decision making process. Superintendent "B" on the other hand, who had full confidence in his support from his board of education, did not run into such issues.

Superintendent “A” shed light on the importance of having a vision and plan in place grounded in the values and beliefs of the school community. He had a strategic plan established prior to the beginning of the 2008 financial recession that communicated the core values and beliefs of the primary goals and direction of the district. “Strategic planning is a means to ensure that the district is moving forward and is aligned with community desires. It ensures broad participation in district activities and even governance (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 192). Although the reduction process did not come easy for Superintendent “A,” he understood that his approach and decisions had to be grounded in the districts collaboratively agreed upon strategic plan because essentially this plan outlines the core values the school community has for the district. In the interview, Superintendent “A” stated that all proposed district initiatives “are targeted on the five-year strategic plan.” Superintendent “B” on the other hand, did not make mention of a strategic plan. His decision making did not necessarily take into account the values and beliefs of the entire school community. There was obvious turmoil between the union and administration and it was noted in the document analysis that community members were upset and disagreed with the decision making process. One may wonder that if School District “B” would have benefited from having a strategic plan in place given the recent events of the prolonged and heated teacher strike.

This study brought to the surface the political dynamics within a school community. It emphasized the importance of possessing political leadership skills as an essential component to the overall success of a superintendent. Superintendent “A” identified the political dynamics early in the process whereas Superintendent “B” was

made aware more so after the final decisions were made. Regardless of when the political dynamics arose within the district, both leaders were forced to deal with the political aspect of such a highly publicized decision making process. The results from this study emphasize importance of incorporating political leadership training in superintendent preparation programs to help aide in the success for aspiring superintendents. Hoyle et al. (2005) believe that a crucial skill needed for effective superintendents is the ability to “identify and understand the behavior of individuals who establish community opinion and influence political decisions” (p. 68). McCarthy (2002) believes, “leadership preparation programs will need to place more emphasis on political acumen” (p. 92). Whether it is from educational leadership preparation programs or through continuing professional develop opportunities, future superintendents need to be properly trained on how to effectively navigate the political landscape of their school district so they are prepared to face the true reality of what being the leader with in a school community entails. Superintendents can obtain hands on experience during their internship within their superintendent preparation program. They could grow in this area by attending meetings or board functions where the school community is involved in the decision making process.

In addition to the political dynamics within a school community, it is also essential that superintendents are properly prepared to make sound financial decisions for their school district. Both superintendent “A” and “B” indicated they obtained their knowledge in school finance from their experience as a school leader. Therefore, it would be beneficial for aspiring superintendents to participate in a similar type of

experience prior to obtaining their job. Within the internship portion of the program, students could gain valuable experience by working with superintendents and business managers as they make financial related decisions for their school district.

Additionally the research study highlighted the importance of reflection as a means to promote growth as a school leader. Both Superintendent “A” and “B” are veteran superintendents who have had a vast amount of administrative experiences in their career. However, this research study identifies that even veteran leaders, through reflection, can still learn and grow as educational leaders. John Maxwell (2005) states, “if you want to lead, you have to learn and if you want to continue to lead you must continue to learn” (p. 127). Even after 33 years of administrative experience, Superintendent “A” showed he was still learning and growing as a leader. He reflected on his decision making process and identified specific changes he would make if faced with similar challenges in his future as a leader. In his interview Superintendent “A” stated “I would bring less naiveté to the board’s predisposition to one level over another. The pressures on board members and the influence those pressures have, I think maybe I would just go in a little more seasoned.” Upon reflection, Superintendent “B” explained his confidence in the decision making process he chose and did not feel he would do anything different if similar challenges arose in the future. However, growth and change was observed after the recent teacher strike in District “B.” Superintendent “B” was quoted during the teachers strike stating “we are committed to collaboratively reaching a resolution that benefits both parties, while still maintaining long-term financial stability

for the educational programs of the district. We value the tremendous work our teachers do, and firmly believe they deserve a fair contract.”

A key component this research study uncovered was the importance of identifying one’s core values and beliefs because essentially this is the driving force of how one will approach an ethical dilemma. Both superintendents believed in making decisions that were best for students. Although they shared the same beliefs in this regard, they had very different approaches to their decision making process. Superintendent “A,” resonating with the ethical lenses of care and critique, approached the situation in a collaborative nature valuing the importance of school community input, allowing for ample opportunity for all voices to be heard. His final recommendations for reductions were not accepted at the board of education level resulting in frustration and resentment towards the board of education. Although he acknowledged that provided this opportunity again, he would better navigate the political landscape, he would not change the approach he took or the recommendations he made because they were grounded in his beliefs and values as the school leader. Superintendent “B”, grounded in the ethical lens of utilitarianism, approached the situation by working with his two trusted administrators to decide what he felt was the best decisions for the district. His final recommendations for reductions were essentially accepted at the board of education level only to later learn about the community’s distaste regarding their lack of involvement in the process.

Effectively running a school district with limited financial resources is a reality many superintendents are facing today. This researcher hopes that when people read this work they will reflect upon their own leadership and will also assist aspiring

superintendents prepare for challenges they may encounter in the future. Additionally, this study will add value to the superintendent selection process for both board of education members and aspiring superintendents, helping to identify key qualities which help define what they believe is effective leadership. The ultimate goal of a superintendent is to lead in a way that provides the best educational opportunities for the students. It is the sincere hope of the researcher that the results of this study reinforce their commitment to the students and that their decision making, regardless of the challenges imposed, are always grounded in what is best for the students.

APPENDIX A
PHONE SCRIPT

PHONE SCRIPT

Project Title:

The Effects of the 2008 Financial Recession on Superintendent's Leadership and Decision making.

May I please speak to _____ (insert name of superintendent).

Hello. My name is Beth McNamara. I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. I am calling to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting for my dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel. You are being asked to participate because of your professional experiences as an Illinois superintendent and the fact that your position as superintendent deems you the instructional leader and chief executive officer of the district.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendent's leadership and decision- making. Specifically this study will look at what reductions, if any, were made in school districts by superintendents in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs and the reason behind their decision making. This dissertation will analyze these decisions through the conceptual framework of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Sign a "Letter of Consent to Participate in Research" indicating your agreement to participate in this research study.
- Participate in a one hour interview about your experience as a superintendent who has dealt with the challenge of operating a school district with limited financial resources available. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes.
- Allow the researcher to attend all future board meetings that will cover information that relates to the school district's financial decision- making. Provide the researcher access to the Board of Education meeting minutes of these future meetings.
- Provide the researcher access to past Board of Education Meeting minutes that relate to any previous financial decisions made in response to the 2008 financial recession.

Risks/Benefits:

There is minimal risk to be considered in the participating of this study. The researcher's intent is to have an open conversation about the effects of the 2008 financial recession and its effects on superintendent's leadership and decision making in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and extra-curricular programs. There are no foreseeable risks associated with the participation in this research beyond the experiences of everyday life. Scrupulous precautions will be taken to ensure your anonymity as a study participant by:

- Keeping all working documents related to the study confidential.
- Providing and referring to each school district with in the study with a unique identification number.
- Destroying all recordings used in interviews after the study is complete.

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation; however, it is hoped that this study will add to the body of research in leadership, education, and superintendency. Additionally it is hoped that the information found in this study will benefit current and future superintendents by providing insights on how to handle the challenges associated with running an effective school system with limited funding and resources available.

Confidentiality:

All responses will remain confidential.

Are you willing to assist me in my doctoral research?

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B
LETTER OF CONSENT

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: *The Effects of the 2008 Financial Recession on Superintendents Leadership and Decision-making*

Researchers: *Beth McNamara*

Faculty Sponsor: *Dr. Marla Israel*

Introduction:

Dear Superintendent,

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Beth McNamara for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Marla Israel in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because your school district relies heavily on General State Aid for funding. As a high school district superintendent your participation in this study will provide educational leaders in the state of Illinois the chance to learn from your experiences as they find themselves challenged with the act of maintaining effective school systems with limited funding and resources.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible effects that the 2008 financial recession might have had on superintendent's leadership and decision-making.

Specifically this study will look at what reductions, if any, were made in school districts by superintendents in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and programs and the reason behind their decision making. This dissertation will analyze these decisions through the conceptual framework of the ethical lenses of utilitarianism, deontology, care, and critique.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Sign a "Letter of Consent to Participate in Research" indicating your agreement to participate in this study.
- Answer questions regarding this research by completing an anonymous interview approximately taking 1 hour to complete and during which paper-pencil and/or an electronic voice recorder would record voice documents. You would be asked open-ended questions related to your decision making in the areas of school curriculum, personnel, and programs.

- Allow the researcher to attend all future board meetings that will cover information that relates to the school district's financial decision-making. Provide the researcher access to the Board of Education meeting minutes of these future meetings.
- Provide the researcher access to past Board of Education meeting minutes that relate to any previous financial decisions made in response to the 2008 financial recession.

Risks/Benefits:

There is minimal risk to be considered in the participating of this study. The researcher's intent is to have an open conversation about the effects of the 2008 financial recession and its effects on superintendent's leadership and decision making in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and programs. There are no foreseeable risks associated with the participation in this research beyond the experiences of everyday life. Scrupulous precautions will be taken to ensure your anonymity as a study participant by:

- Keeping all working documents related to the study confidential.
- Providing and referring to each school district with in the study with a unique identification number.
- Destroying all recordings used in interviews after the study is complete.

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation; however, it is hoped that this study will add to the body of research in leadership, education, and superintendency. Additionally it is hoped that the information found in this study will benefit current and future superintendents by providing insights on how to handle the challenges associated with running an effective school system with limited funding and resources available.

Confidentiality:

- All responses will remain confidential. Each respondent will receive a unique identification number. All data will be analyzed/coded using the identification number. Individual names and school districts will not be used in the final writing.
- The audio tape recordings of the interview's and transcripts will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's home. Once the final writing of the research is completed, the recordings will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research study, please contact:

Beth McNamara at 708-567-9307 or at emcnamara@lw210.org
Dr. Marla Israel at 312-915-6336 or at misrael@luc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I, _____, have agreed to perform the duties of audiotape transcriber for a research study being conducted by Beth McNamara, Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago.

I understand the nature of this work will involve sensitive and confidential information about the interview subjects. By signing this agreement, I agree to keep all transcript information confidential and in a secure place when in my possession.

Furthermore, the information in my possession will not be shared verbally or visually with anyone except the researcher.

Beth McNamara will provide the necessary equipment for me to transcribe the audiotape interviews from this study. This will include earphones, so that I may listen to the tapes confidentially. Transcriptions and audiotapes will be kept in a locked portfolio, provided by the researcher, while in my possession.

I agree to the confidentiality terms of this agreement.

Signature of Audiotape Transcriber: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Demographic Questions:

1. How long have you been a superintendent in this district?
2. How long have you worked in educational administration prior to obtaining a position as the superintendent?
3. Did you work in this district prior to becoming the superintendent?
4. How many years of your administrative career have taken place in an Illinois School District?
5. How did you acquire your knowledge in school finance?

General Leadership Questions:

1. As the instructional leader of the district what is currently your top priority?
2. What are the metrics of success that you use to measure whether or not a particular decision is successful?
3. Describe your work with your administrative team. What are the most common topics on your agendas and in your meetings?
 - a. Describe your relationship with your Business Manager?
 - b. How does the business manager affect or influence your decision making?
4. Describe your relationship with your current Board of Education.
 - a. In your work with the Board of Education do you use subcommittees or a Committee of the Whole structure? Explain why you chose one over the other.

Budget Questions:

1. Does your school district have a tax cap?
2. Please explain what sources of revenue your school district relies on to operate on a yearly basis.
3. How does General State Aid play a role in your School District's budget?
4. How much does your school district depend on this assistance from the state? How has it affected your budget planning process since the financial recession in 2008?

2008 Financial Crisis Questions:

1. When you were informed of the decrease in funding from the state what process did you take to overcome this challenge?
2. How did you communicate this issue with the various stakeholders of your school district?
3. What factors or considerations did you bring into your decision making regarding reductions in the area of teaching and learning?
 - a. What final reductions were made in the area of teaching and learning?

- b. If you encountered resistance with one of your decisions in this area from a member of your leadership team, board of education, or community, describe how you responded. Could you provide an example of this in action?
- 4. What factors or considerations did you bring into your decision making regarding reductions in the area of school personnel?
 - a. What final reductions were made in the area of school personnel?
 - b. If you encountered resistance with one of your decisions in this area from a member of your leadership team, board of education, or community, describe how you responded. Could you provide an example of this in action?
- 5. What factors or considerations did you bring into your decision making regarding reductions in the area of student extra-curricular programs?
 - a. What final reductions were made in the area of student extra-curricular programs?
 - b. If you encountered resistance with one of your decisions in this area from a member of your leadership team, board of education, or community, describe how you responded. Could you provide an example of this in action?
- 6. Tell me about a time when you were faced with a tough financial decision in your school district. Please explain why you made the decision and explain the outcome of your decision.

Reflection Question:

- 1. Reflecting back, would you make any changes or adjustments to your final decisions regarding reductions? If so what would you have changed and please explain why?
- 2. How does the community feel about your final decisions regarding reductions?
- 3. How does the school board feel about your final decisions regarding reductions?
- 4. How does your leadership team feel about your final decisions regarding reductions?

REFERENCES

- Acharya, V., & Richardson, M. (2009). Causes of the financial crisis. *Critical Review*, 21.
- Achilles, C. (1988). Unlocking some mysteries of administration and administrator preparation: A reflective prospect. In D. Griffiths, R. Stout, & P. Forsyth (Eds.), *Leaders for America's schools* (pp. 41-67). Berkley, CA: McCutchan.
- Alexander, K., & Alexander, M.D. (2005). *American Public School Law* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Antinori, S. (2012, May 31). Superintendent "A": Education funding could cost District "A" millions. *The Community Patch*.
- Antinori, S. (2013, September 23). District "A" school board Oks first surplus budget since recession. *The Community Patch*.
- Bateman, N., Selby, P., & Martin, C. A., (1915). *Historical encyclopedia of Illinois, Volume 2*. Chicago, IL: Munsell Publishing Company.
- Barker, D. (2012, July 3). Is deregulation to blame for the financial crisis? Retrieved November 11, 2013, from The Federal Finance Forum:
<http://www.thecre.com/insurance/?p=864>
- Bateman, N., Selby, P., & Martin, C. A., (1915). *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, Volume 2*. Chicago, IL: Munsell Publishing Company.
- Beck, L.G. (1994). *Reclaiming educational administration as a caring profession*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Beckner, W. (2003). *Ethics for educational leaders*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Beckner, W. (2004). *Ethics for educational leaders*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Bell, C. S. (1988). Organizational influences on women's experience in the superintendency. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 65(4), 31-59.
- Belting, P. E. (1919). *Development of the free public high school in Illinois to 1860*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A. Humanities and Social Sciences (370389)

- Bennis, W., & Goldsmith J. (1997). *Learning to lead: A workbook on becoming a leader* (Rev. ed.). Reading, MA: Perseus Books.
- Benson, C. S. (1968). *The economics of public education* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Berger, S. (2014, October 2). School District “B” teachers strike after contract talks break down. *The Chicago Tribune*.
- Berger, S. (2014, October 30). School District “B” teachers come to terms after month long strike. *The Chicago Tribune*.
- Bernanke, B. S. (2011, March 2). Challenges for state and local governments. Speech at 2011 Annual Awards Dinner of the Citizens Budget Commission, New York, NY.
- Bjork, L., & Kowalski, T. (2005). Role expectations of the district superintendent: Implications for deregulating preparation and licensing. *Journal of Thought*, 40(2), 73-96.
- Blair, F. (1925). *The First Free School Law in Illinois*. Springfield, IL: Department of Instruction.
- Blumberg, A. (1985). *The school superintendent: Living with conflict*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bocala, C. (2012). Strategic management of human capital in education: Improving instructional practice and student learning in schools by Allan R. Odden. *Harvard Educational Review*, 82(2), 310-317.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1991). Leadership and management effectiveness: A multi-frame, multi-sector analysis. *Human Resource Management*.
- Bordum, A. (2005). Immanuel Kant, Jürgen habermas and the categorical imperative. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 31(7), 851-874.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Power and ideology in education* (pp. 487-511). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Braun, K. (2010). The U.S. Housing Bubble and Burst: Impacts on employment. *Monthly Labor Review*, 3-17.
- Brazer, S. (2010). Collaborative strategic decision making in school districts. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 48(2), 196-217.

- Brimley, Jr., V., & Garfield, R. R. (2005). *Financing education in a climate of change* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Brody, L. (2009, September 20). Recession's toll on children. *Chicago Tribune*, pp. 1-2.
- Brown, D. G. (1973). What is mill's principle of utility? *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 3(1), 1-12.
- Brunner, C. C. (1998). Can power support an "ethic of care"? *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, 4(2), 142-175.
- Brunner, C. C. (1999). *Scared dreams: Women and the superintendency*. New York: University of New York Press.
- Brunner, C. C. (2000). *Principles of power: Women superintendents and the riddle of heart*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Brunner, C. C., & Grogan, M. (2007). *Women leading school systems: Uncommon roads to fulfillment*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Burgett, J., McGeem, M., & Rosborg, J. (2006). *What every superintendent and principal needs to know*. Novato, CA: Education Communication Unlimited.
- Byun, K. (2010). The U.S. Housing Bubble and Burst: Impacts on employment. *Monthly Labor Review*, 3-17.
- Carter, G. R., & Cunningham, W. G. (1997). *The American school superintendent: Leading in an age of pressure*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Campbell, R., Cunningham, L., Nystrand, R., & Usdan, M. (1990). *The organization and control of American schools*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Chase, S. E. (1995). *Ambiguous empowerment: The work narratives of women superintendents*. Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Chakrabarti, R., & Setren, E. (2011). *The impact of the great recession on school district finances*. New York: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff Reports, no. 534.
- Cherkasova, E. V. (1999). *The deontology of the heart: A study of Dostoevsky's and Kant's unconditional ethics*. (Ph.D. dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Christie, L. (2009, February 12). *Home prices in record plunge*. Retrieved from CNN Money: http://money.cnn.com/2009/02/12/real_estate/Latest_median_prices/

- Code of Ethics*. (2007, March 1). Retrieved from American Association of School Administrators: <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=1390>
- Cooper, B. S., Fusarelli, L. D., & Carella, V. A. (2000). *Career crisis in the school superintendency: The results of a national survey*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Cravens, X., Elliott, S., Goldring, E., Murphy, J., & Porter, A. (2007). *Assessing learning-centered leadership*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cubberley, E. P. (1906). *School funds and their apportionment*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Dadayan, L. (2012, July). The impact of the great recession. *Rockefeller Institute Brief*, pp. 1-13.
- Demyanyk, Y., & Otto Van, H. (2011). Understanding the subprime mortgage crisis. *Review of Financial Studies*, 24(6).
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DeVita, C. M. (2007). *A bridge to school reform*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.
- Dewey, J. (1902). *The school and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- District “A” Board of Education Meeting Minutes from 2008-2014.
- District “B” Board of Education Meeting Minutes from 2008-2014
- Dixon, M. (2011, May). *Public education finances: 2011*. Retrieved October 26, 2013, from U.S. Department of Commerce: <http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/11f33pub.pdf>
- Dixon, M. (2013). *Public education finances: 2011*. Government Division Reports, United States Census Bureau.

- Durflinger, N., & Maki, M. (2007). *Illinois state superintendent survey 2006: Analysis and findings*. Normal, IL: Center for the Study of Educational Policy Analysis.
- Educational Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*. (2009). Washington, DC: Domestic Policy Council.
- Educational Leadership Policy Standards: 2008*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.
- Ellerson, N. (2008). *AASA Opportunity for Federal Education Funding Survey*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. Retrieved from: <http://www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=2886>
- Ellerson, N. (2009). *AASA Impact of the Economic Downturn on School Jobs Snapshot Survey*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. Retrieved from: http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Newsroom/_files/AASAJobCutsSurvey.pdf
- Ellerson, N. (2009). *Schools and the stimulus: How America's public school districts are using ARRA funds*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. Retrieved from: http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/AASASTimulusSurveyAug09.pdf
- Ellerson, N. (2010). *Cliff hanger: How America's public schools continue to feel the impact of the economic downturn*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. Retrieved from: [http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/CliffHangerFINAL\(1\).pdf](http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/CliffHangerFINAL(1).pdf)
- Ellerson, N. (2011). *Projection of National Education job cuts for the 2011-12 school year*. Arlington, VA: AASA. Retrieved from: http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/AASA%20Sequester%20Press%20Release%20022613.pdf
- Ellerson, N. (2012, March). *Weathering the storm: How the economic recession continues to impact school districts*. Alexandria, VA: AASA. Retrieved from: https://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/Weathering_the_Storm_Mar_2012_FINAL.pdf
- Evans, A. (2011). *Illinois school finance – One school district's struggle to maintain financial solvency*. (D.Ed., Roosevelt University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.

- Fabbre, A. (2012, February 28). District "A" approves cutting equivalent of 64 full-time positions. *Trib Local*.
- Fabbre, A. (2013, September 24). School District "A" budget shows a surplus. *Chicago Tribune*.
- Federal Role in Education*. (2012, February 3). Retrieved November 15, 2013 from U.S. Department of Education: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>
- Feeney, S., & Freeman, N. K. (1999). *Ethics and the early childhood educator: Using NAEYC Code of Ethics*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Fisher, G. W. (1996). *The worst tax? A history of the property tax in America*. Lawrence, MO: University of Kansas Press.
- Fitch, W. L. (2009). *A study of relationships between ethical decision making, leadership styles, and demographics in Pennsylvania superintendents*. (D.Ed., Indiana University of Pennsylvania). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Ford, T. (1854). *A history of Illinois: From its commencement as a state in 1818 to 1847*. Chicago, IL: S.C. Griggs.
- Forelle, C., & Craig, S. (2010, February 22). Debt deals haunt Europe --- Investors re-examine complex financial maneuvers used to hide borrowings. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/399106519?accountid=12163>
- Foster, W. (1986). *Paradigms and promises: New approaches to educational administration*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Fritts, J. (2004). *Essentials of Illinois school finance* (2nd ed.). Springfield, IL: Illinois Association of School Boards.
- Fritts, J. B. (2006). *Essentials of Illinois finance: A guide to techniques, issues and resources* (3rd ed.). Springfield, IL: Illinois Association of School Boards.
- Fritts, J. B. (2008). *Essentials of Illinois finance: A guide to techniques, issues and resources* (4th ed.). Springfield, IL: Illinois Association of School Boards.
- Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change: What the best leaders do to help their organizations survive and thrive*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Garrett, T. (2009). Recession takes toll on eighth district tax collections. *The Regional Economist*, 19-20.
- Gilligan, C. (1977). Concepts of the self and morality. *Harvard Educational Review*, 481-517.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gilliland, D. (2008). *The effects of consolidation on Illinois School Districts*. (Ed.D. dissertation, Western Illinois University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Schooling and the struggle for public life: Critical pedagogy in the modern age*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (2003). *The abandoned generation: Democracy beyond the culture of fear*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Glasgow, J. M. (2001). *Value in Kant's ethics: In defense of a value-based deontology* (Order No. 3029891). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. (250808943). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/250808943?accountid=12163>
- Glass, T. E. (2000). Where are all the women superintendents? *The School Administrator*, 1-6.
- Glass, T. E., Bjork, L., & Brunner, C. (2000). *The 2000 study of the American school superintendent: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Glass, T. E., & Franceschini. (2007). *The study of the American school superintendent: A mid-decade study*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Goleman, D. (1997). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Governor Quinn delivers budget address reduces discretionary spending to below 2008 levels; Cuts FY2013 agency spending by \$425M. (2012, February 22). Retrieved November 15, 2013, from Illinois Government News Network: <http://www3.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=2&RecNum=10036>
- Grogan, M. (1999). Equity/equality issues of gender, race, and class. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(4), 518-536.

- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1981). *Effective evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Guthrie, J. W. (1990). The evolution of educational management: Eroding myths and emerging models. In B. Mitchell, & L. Cunningham (Eds.), *Educational leadership and changing contexts of families, communities, and schools. Eighty-ninth Yearbook for the National Society for the Study of Education* (pp. 210-231). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Guthrie, J. W., Springer, M. G., Rolle, R. A., & Houck, E. A. (2007). *Modern education finance and policy*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Haddick, S. (2008). *The "other" superintendent: The ethical leadership and decision making practice of successful women superintendents*. (Ed.D. dissertation, Loyola University Chicago). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Haig, R. M. (1914). *A history of the general property tax in Illinois*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Hall, R., McCaw, D., Philhower, S., & Pierson, M. (2004, January). School district reorganization in Illinois, improving educational opportunities for students. *Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs Publications*. Retrieved November 14, 2013 from: http://www.iira.org/pubs/publications/IIRA_Reports_661.pdf
- Hannaway, J., & Rotherham, A. (2006). *Collective bargaining in education negotiating change in today's schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press
- Harris, S. (2009) *Learning from the Best: Lessons from award winning superintendents*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Hatfield, J. M. (2011). *Leadership and ethics: A pragmatic exploration among candidates in a doctoral leadership program*. (Ed.D., Lincoln Memorial University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (1009735393).
- Herget, H. E. (1979). Democracy revisited: The law and school districts in Illinois. *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 72(2), 123-138. Retrieved from <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/ISHS/ishs-1979may/ishs-1979may123.pdf>
- Hernandez, T. (2009, October 8). District "A" starts trimming deficit by cutting about \$2 million this year. *Trib Local*.
- Hernandez, T. (2010, May 27). State owes District "A" \$23 million; District financial picture grim. *Trib Local*.

- Hess, F. M. (2013). *Cage-busting leadership*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Hickrod, G. A., Hubbard, B. C., & Elder, D. E. (1987). *A brief history of K-12 finance in Illinois, or, 162 years in search of the perfect formula* (The MacArthur/Spencer 163 special series on Illinois school finance, 2nd ed.). Normal, IL: Center for the Study of Educational Finance, Illinois State University.
- Honig, M., & Coburn, C. (2008). Evidence-based decision making in school district central offices. *Educational Policy*, 22(4), 578-608.
- Hoyle, J., Bjork, L., Collier, V., & Glass, T. (2005). *The superintendent as CEO*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Huber, N. (2002). Approaching leadership education in the new millennium. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 1(1), 25-34.
- Hull, J. (2010, October 7). Cutting to the bone: How the economic crisis affects schools. Retrieved October 27, 2013, from Center for Public Education: <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Public-education/Cutting-to-the-bone-At-a-glance/Cutting-to-the-bone-How-the-economic-crisis-affects-schools.html>
- Illinois Association of School Boards. (2009). *2008 Survey of Illinois Superintendents*. Springfield IL.
- Illinois Association of School Boards. (2012). *Understanding school finance*. Retrieved November 9, 2013 from <http://www.iasb.com>
- Illinois Association of School Boards. (2012). *Your school board and you*. Retrieved November 13, 2013 from <http://www.iasb.com/pdf/YourSchoolBoardandYou.pdf>
- Illinois Constitution, 1970.
- Illinois Department of Revenue. (2002). *The Illinois property tax system: A general guide to the local property tax cycle*. Springfield, IL. Retrieved November 9, 2013 from <http://tax.illinois.gov/publications/localgovernment/ptax1004.pdf>
- Illinois Department of Revenue. Retrieved July 8, 2013 from <http://www.revenue.state.il.us>
- Illinois School Code. (2010). Springfield, IL: Illinois Association of School Boards.
- Illinois State Board of Education. (n.d). *School Business Services*. Retrieved February 1, 2013 from <http://www.isbe.net/finance/verification.htm>

- Illinois State Board of Education. (n.d). *Mechanics of a school district budget: A guide to understanding the Illinois school district budget process*. Retrieved April 28, 2011 from <http://www.isbe.net/sfms/budget/mechanics.pdf>
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2010). *General State Aid -FY 2010 Overview*. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/gsa_overview.pdf
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2010). *FY2011 Budget August 2, 2010*. Springfield, IL. Retrieved January 29, 2012 from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/budget/FY11_budget.pdf
- Illinois State Treasurer. (2012). *About the Illinois funds*. Retrieved December 22, 2013 from <http://www.treasurer.il.gov/programs/illinois-funds/about-illinois-funds.aspx#>
- Israel, M. (2004). *Ethical dilemmas for early childhood educators: The ethics of being accountable*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- James, H. T. (1967). Politics and community decision making in education. *Review of Educational Research*, 37(4, Educational Organization, Administration, and Finance), 377-386.
- Johns, R. L. (1973). *Full state funding for education: Evolution and implications*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Judy Masterson, jmasterson@stmedianetwork.com & @JudyReport. (2013, October 9). Head start program feels pressure of federal shutdown. *School District "B" County News-Sun: Web Edition Articles*.
- Kabari, J. A. (2009). *John Rawls, political liberalism, and moral virtues*. (Ph.D., Loyola University Chicago). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Kant, I. (1998). *Groundwork to the metaphysic of morals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Katz, M., Noddings, N., & Strike, K. (1999). Justice and caring: The search for common ground in education. Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Kaucher, E. (2010). *Ethical decision making and effective leadership*. (Ed.D., Alliant International University, San Diego). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Kellner, S. (2012). *Superintendent leadership and student achievement in suburban high schools: A sequential explanatory mixed methods analysis*. Chicago, IL: ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing.

- Kersten, T. (2012, March 29). *Sources of revenue*. Retrieved from the Connexions Website: <http://cnx.org/content/m18334/1.20/>
- Kersten, T. A. (2012). *Moving into the superintendency: How to succeed in making the transition*. Lanham, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Kersten, T. (2008). *Taking the mystery out of Illinois school finance*. Houston, TX: Connexions.
- Kersten, T. A. (2008). Understanding new growth under the Illinois property tax extension limitation law (PTELL). *The Journal of School Business Management*, 20(1), 15-18.
- Kessler, R. (1992). Shared decision making works! *Educational Leadership*, 50(1), 36-38.
- Kidder, R. M. (1995). *How good people make tough choices: Resolving the dilemmas of ethical living*. New York: Fireside.
- Knowles, J. (2010). \$21.7 M in cuts for District “A.” *ABC Eyewitness News*. Retrieved March 9, 2014, from <http://abc7chicago.com/archive/7273235/>
- Kowalski, T. (1999). *The school superintendent: Theory, practice, and cases*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kowalski, T. J., McCord, R. S., Peterson, G. J., Young, P. I., & Ellerson, N. M. (2011). *The American school superintendent: 2010 decennial study*. Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield.
- Laws of Illinois. (n.d.). 4 G.A. (1824-1825), 121-128.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Pressle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Levitin, A., & Wachter, S. (2010). *Explaining the housing bubble*. Institute for Law & Economics University of Pennsylvania Law School. Research Paper No. 10-15.
- Lundeen, V., Hickrod, G. A., Hubbard, B. C., & Chaudhari, R. (1979). *The Illinois general purpose grant-in-aid system 1979-1980*. Normal, IL: Center for the Study of Educational Finance, Illinois State University.
- Leachman, M., Mai, C., & Oliff, P. (2012, September 4). New school year brings more cuts in. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3825>

- Letters to the editor. (2011, September, 6). *The County of District "B" News-Sun*, p. 9.
- Letters to the editor. (2011, September 23). *The County of District "B" News- Sun*, p. 9.
- Liu, B. S. (2010). *What moral dilemma? The use of deontology and consequentialism to justify moral intuitions*. (M.A., University of California, Irvine). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Londrigan, A., & Schaefer, M. (2008). *The voice of real estate in Illinois*. Retrieved August 11, 2013 from <http://www.illinoisrealtor.org>
- Malone, T. (2009, October 5). Lunch waivers on the rise in schools across Illinois. *Chicago Tribune*, pp. 1-2.
- Masterson, J. (2010, June 3). P.E.P. educates 200 at-risk kids - Without state funding, preschoolers to lose program. *The News Sun*, p. 8.
- Mayer, C., Pence, K., & Sherland, S. (2008). *The rise in mortgage defaults*. Finance and Economics Discussion Series Divisions of Research & Statistics and Monetary Affairs Federal Reserve Board, Washington, DC.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McNichol, E., & Lav, I. (2008, June). *29 states face total budget shortfall of at least*. Retrieved from Center For Budget and Policy Priorities: http://www.fourwinds10.net/resources/uploads/pdf/29_States_Face_48_Billion_Shortfall.pdf
- Merriam Webster: An Encyclopedia Britannica Company*. Retrieved February 1, 2013 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com>
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- McCarthy, M. (2002). The changing environment for school leaders: Market forces. In G. Perreault, & F. Lunenburg (Eds.), *The changing world of school administration* (2nd ed., pp. 01-109). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- McCord, R. S., & Ellerson, N. M. (2009). *Looking back, looking forward: How the economic impact continues to impact school districts*. American Association of

- School Administrators. Retrieved on November 23, 2013, from <http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Resources/files/LookingBackLookingForward.pdf>
- Milkie, M. A., & Warner, C. (2011). Classroom learning environments and the mental health of first grade children. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 4-22.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Mill, J. S. (2007). *Utilitarianism*. New York: Dover.
- Miller, J. (2009, January 27). Caterpillar moves to lay off 20,000 workers. *Chicago Tribune*.
- Millerborg, M. A. (1990). Ethics and the law: What drives educational administration decisions? (Doctoral Dissertation, Oklahoma State University).
- Monk, D. H., & Haller, E. J. (1986). *Organizational alternatives for small rural schools: Final report to the New York State Legislature*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- Moran, D. (2009, September 23). Cuts in athletic programs may be less than year away. *The News Sun*, p. 28.
- Moran, D. (2010, June, 3). School district looks to teachers to shave deficit – salary freezes, pay cuts, larger classes. *The News Sun*, p. 6.
- Moran, D. (2010, May 13). School nurse layoffs aired. *The News Sun*, p. 2.
- Morgan, P. D. (2007). Defining and detecting predatory lending. Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff Reports, no. 273.
- Mullins, M. (2011, August, 27). District “A” facing \$5.48M 2011-12 budget deficit. *The Community Patch*.
- Mullins, M. (2012, February 28). District “A” cuts 64 jobs to slash budget deficit. *The Community Patch*.
- Mullins, M. (2012, March 27). School board cuts 17 positions. *The Community Patch*.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Odden, A. (2011). *Strategic management of human capital in education: Improving instructional practice and student learning in schools*. New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.
- Odden, A. R., & Picus, L. O. (2008). *School finance: A policy perspective* (4th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Olesiuk, S., & Kalser, K. (2009). The sand states: Anatomy of a perfect housing-market storm. Retrieved from www.fdic.gov/bank/analytical/quarterly/2009_vol3_1/AnatomyPerfectHousing.html
- Oliff, P., & Johnson, N. (2010). Premature end of federal assistance to states threatens education reforms and jobs. *Center for Budget and Policy Priorities*. Retrieved on October, 23, 2013 from <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3158>
- Owings, W. A., & Kaplan, L. S. (2006). *American public school finance*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Ozar, D. (2003, January). Framework for discussing ethics. Paper presented in Philosophy 472 for Loyola University Chicago, IL.
- Pagelow, R. (2008, September , 26). School District "B" receives grant for low-income at-risk students. *The News Sun*, p. 20.
- Pagelow, R. (2009, March 21). School debts grow to offset tardy state. *The News Sun*, p. 4.
- Pascopella, A. (2011, April). *Superintendent staying power*. Retrieved from District Administration: <http://www.districtadministration.com/article/superintendent-staying-power>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Property Tax Extension Limitation Law. 35 ILCS 200/18-185 et seq.
- Rado, D., & Ruthhart, B. (2012, Sep 13). School districts stepping back from 'step' pay hikes. *Chicago Tribune* Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1039196637?accountid=12163>
- Richards, L. (2005). *Handling qualitative data*. London: Sage.
- Roberts, C. (2008). Developing future leaders: the role of reflection in the classroom. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 1(1), 116-130.

- Rodkin, D. (2010, September 20). Best elementary schools: Education's financial crisis. *Chicago Magazine*.
- Rossman, G., & Rallis, S. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ruzich, J. (2010, September 14). District "A's" projected deficit at \$6.7 million. *Trib Local*.
- Ruzich, J. (2011, March 1). District "A" uses \$5.7 M Federal grant to stave off massive layoffs. *Trib Local*.
- Sabella, J. (2014, August 16). Schools in trouble: Layoffs could top 20,000 in state school districts. *Huffington Post*.
- School District A. (2010, March). *The Core: District "A" Community Newsletter*, pp. 1-8.
- School District "A" School Website.
- School District "B" School Website.
- Schilling, T., & Tomal, D. (2013). *Resource management for school administrators: Optimizing fiscal, facility, and human resources*. Lanham, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- School Finance: Federal, State, and Local K-12 school finance overview*. (2013, June 30). Retrieved November 11, 2013 from New America Foundation: <http://feb.p.newamerica.net/background-analysis/school-finance>
- Shellenbarger, S. (2011, May 25). Do school cuts lead to stressed students? *Wall Street Journal*.
- School District "A" school board delays vote on most proposed cuts. (2010, January 29). *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from: http://articles.chicagobreakingnews.com/2010-01-29/news/28528513_1_band-instructors-cuts-special-meeting
- School District "A" may cut 222 jobs. (2010, January 26). *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from: http://articles.chicagobreakingnews.com/2010-01-26/news/28528325_1_president-rod-westfall-elimination-of-summer-school-budget-cuts
- Schwant, T. H. (2007). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Schwant, T. H. (1993). *Theory for the moral sciences; Crisis of identity and purpose*, in D. J. Flinders, & G. E. Mills (Eds.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Senate Journal. (1826, December 15). *5th General Assembly, Session 1*, 35.
- Senge, P. (1990). The leader's new work: Building learning organizations. *Sloan Management Review*, 32(1), 7-23.
- Selby, P., Bateman, N., & Church, C.A. (2010). *Encyclopedia of Illinois, Volume 2*. Chicago, IL: Munsell Publishing Company
- Shapiro, J. P., & Gross, S. J. (2008). *Ethical educational leadership in turbulent times: (Re)sovling moral dilemmas*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (Taylor & Francis Group).
- Shapiro, J., & Stefkovich, J. (2011). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Siedman, I. E. (1991). *Interviewing as qualitative research*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks; CA: Sage Publication.
- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York; NY: The Guilford Press.
- Stanton, M. A. (2007). *Superintendents' ethical and legal decision making*. (Ed.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- State, Local and Federal Financing for Illinois Public Schools, 1999-2000*. (2001, January). Illinois State Board of Education. Retrieved May 10, 2008 from <http://www.isbe.net/sfms/pdf/slf00.pdf>
- Strayer, G. D., & Haig, R. M. (1923). *Financing of education in the State of New York: A report reviewed and presented by the educational finance inquiry commission under the auspices of the American council on education*. New York, NY: The Macmillan Company.
- Strickler, Sr., M. R. (2009). *Educational leaders' decision-making: Presence, influence, and strength of personal values, morals, and ethics*. (Ed.D. dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Strike, K. (2007). *Ethical leadership in schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Strike, K. A., & Soltis, J. F. (2009). *The ethics of teaching* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- Stiglitz, J. (2009, June). Interpreting the causes of the Great Recession of 2008. BIS Conference Lecture. Basel.
- Stiglitz, J. (2009). The global crisis, social protection and jobs. *The International Labour Review*, 1-13.
- Streitwieser, M. L. (2009, June). *A primer on BEA's industry accounts*. Retrieved October 24, 2013 from U.S. Department of Commerce: http://www.bea.gov/scb/pdf/2009/06%20June/0609_indyaccts_primer_a.pdf
- S&P/Case-Shiller U.S. National Home Price Index*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 12, 2013 from S & P Dow Jones Indices: <http://us.spindices.com/indices/real-estate/sp-case-shiller-us-national-home-price-index>
- Taylor, S. C. (2008). *John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism and liberalism as virtue and character*. (Ph.D. dissertation, Bryn Mawr College). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Thompson, S. D. (1989). Troubled kingdoms, restless natives. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 70(5), 371-375.
- Thomasian, J. (2010). The big reset: State government after the Great Recession. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Retrieved on June 8, 2010 from <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/1002STATEGOVTAFTERGREATRECESSION.PDF>
- Townsend, R., Johnston, G., Gross, G., Lynch, P., Garcy, L., Roberts, B., & Novotney, P. (2007). *Effective superintendent-school board practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Updegraff, H. (1922). *Rural school survey of New York State: Financial support*. Ithaca, NY: Joint Committee on Rural Schools.
- Udell, G. (2009). Wall Street, Main Street, and a credit crunch: Thoughts on the current financial crisis. *Business Horizons*, 117-125.
- Understanding School Finance*. (2012, August). Retrieved November 13, 2013 from Illinois Association of School Boards: <http://www.iasb.com/pdf/understandingsf.pdf>

- United States Census Bureau. (2008). Annual survey of local government finance. *Public Education Finance 2006*, 1-134.
- Vazquez, R., & Gidwitz, R. (2002, February). *State, local, and federal financing for Illinois Public Schools 2000-2001*. Retrieved November 3, 2013 from Illinois State Board of Education: <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/sfms/pdf/slf01.pdf>
- Velasco, C. (2011, April 9). District "A" could cut 112 jobs. *Chicago Sun Times*.
- Verick, S., & Islam, I. (2010). *The Great Recession of 2008-2009. Causes, consequences and policy responses*. Bonn, Germany, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) Discussion Paper Series, No. 4934.
- Vine, K. L. (2009). *An examination of public school administrators' perceptions of ethical decision making during turbulent times*. (Ed.D. dissertation, Lamar University - Beaumont). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Vogel, C. (2008, February). Budget busters, trimming district budgets is always challenging. *District Administrators, The Magazine of School District Management*, 9-11.
- Wagner, P., & Simpson, D. (2009). *Ethical decision making in school administration*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Webster's online dictionary*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.websters-onlinedictionary.org>
- Weis, L., & Fine, M. (1993). *Beyond silenced voices: Class, race, gender in U.S. schools*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Wilhoit, G. (2008). *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: 2008*. Washington, DC: The Council of Chief State School Officers.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2005). *The art of fieldwork* (2nd ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Yes, Classrooms First. (2012, January 31). *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-01-31/opinion/ct-edit-consolidate-20120131_1_school-districts-restructuring-of-public-education-cost-effective-education
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yudof, M. G., Kirp, D. L., & Levin, B. (1992). *Educational policy and the law*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company.

VITA

Elizabeth McNamara is the daughter of Robert and Carol Bartkus. She was born in Evergreen Park, Illinois on July 5, 1982. She currently resides in Lockport, Illinois with her husband, Patrick and daughter, Avery. Elizabeth grew up in Mokena where she attended grade school and Lincoln-Way High School where she graduated in 2000.

Elizabeth graduated from the University of Evansville in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education. In 2008, Elizabeth received a Master of Arts from Governors State University in University Park, Illinois. At that time she also earned an Illinois Type 75 Administrative Certificate in Educational Administration. Elizabeth was accepted into the doctoral program in Educational Administration and Supervision at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois in 2009.

Elizabeth has been in the field of education for the past 11 years. In 2004, Elizabeth worked at H.L. Richards High School as a Health teacher. In 2005, she was hired by her alma mater, Lincoln-Way High School where she taught and coached soccer. From 2007-2009, Elizabeth began her administrative career serving as Department Chair and since 2010 she has served in her current role as the Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The dissertation submitted by Elizabeth A. McNamara has been read and approved by the following committee:

Marla Israel, Ed.D., Director
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Susan Sostak, Ed.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Lawrence Wyllie, Ed.D.
Retired Superintendent of High School District #210